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THE REVELATION
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A PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION

OF THE

REVELATION

OF

ST JOHN THE DIVINE

BY THE

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'*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*'—REV. iii. 22

PREFACE

MANY years ago, at a time when no intelligible or satisfactory explanation of the Apocalypse existed, Dr. Hallifax wrote these words in the eighth of his Warburton Lectures:

"Whatever principle is assumed in order to explain these prophecies, it must bear the exposition quite through, and solve all the seeming contradictions. . . . Particular symbols and passages may be expounded by partial commentators with great plausibility and even semblance of truth; but nothing short of an universal principle will clear up the whole of this prophetical enigma, or produce a full conviction in which the mind of a sagacious inquirer may acquiesce."

He lays down a rule which it behoves all interpreters to follow. It is a rule to which I have rigidly adhered during half a century's study of the Revelation. I have rejected endless interpretations of particular symbols, suggested either by the writings of others or by my own imagination, when found to be inconsistent with the obvious meaning of other symbols, or with the no less obvious purpose of the whole prophecy.

It was my practice fifty years ago, when much interested in the study of general history, to read the whole or a large portion of the Apocalypse every Sunday, without any idea of attempting its interpretation. The Sacred Book in those days seemed given over to fanatics and would-be prophets of the style of Dr. Cumming, Faber, Elliot, and others ; so that when in 1852 I published a short outline of a scheme, entirely different from any other then existing, the following singular, but scarcely discouraging, remark was made to me : "Your scheme is very easy to understand and seems to be consistent all through, but it can hardly be a true interpretation, for if it is so the Revelation is shown to be an intelligible prophecy, and almost every one else regards it as hopelessly obscure."

After studying a great many commentaries, both ancient and modern, I was able to fill up this outline, and published the result in 1858, a revised edition of the same in 1871, and then in 1881 a translation and commentary intended chiefly for devotional reading. Of this work Dr. Charles Wordsworth, late Bishop of St. Andrews, wrote to me in a private letter :— "I have read it through with my best attention, and I think it one of the most satisfactory books upon that difficult subject I have ever met with."

My scheme, then, has been honestly thought out from the original, and although as an intelligible and consistent whole it differs from others, the notes will show that I cannot be accused of novelty in my interpretation of individual symbols ; even for my

explanation of the Second, Third, and Fourth Seals, which gives them a new and most practical meaning, I have some authority from ancient writers.

The edition of 1871 having been for some time out of print, I publish this third edition at the request of many of my readers who are desirous that this very simple and intelligible principle of interpretation should be more widely known. One of them writes thus: "As time goes on men will turn more and more to this book of the Revelation, and then they will look for some book that really has a mind of its own on the subject, and I say again . . . that yours is sober, thoughtful, Scriptural, thorough and consistent, to a degree which places it very far above every book I have read on the subject. This is why I believe it ought to be republished."

Thus encouraged I publish this third edition, in which, at the suggestion of one of my readers, I have embodied some portions of two of my other works on the same subject.

No man can expect to understand such a book as the Revelation, or even a commentary upon it, without long and patient study, or without the three following qualifications:

I. A sufficient general knowledge of the history of Christendom.

II. A thorough acquaintance with the language and symbols of the Hebrew prophets.

III. A mind free, as far as may be possible, from theological and ecclesiastical prejudices.

The absence of these qualifications has been the

chief cause of the mistakes and fanciful suggestions of most of the interpreters of the Prophecy.

They have been—if not ignorant of history or Hebrew Prophecy—either blinded by strong anti-papal prejudices, or unwilling to see how conspicuous a part the Papacy plays in the predictions of the Apocalypse.

I hope and pray that this book may be a source of instruction and comfort to the faithful Christian, to whatever portion of a sadly divided Christendom he may belong.

The Apocalypse, as it will be shown, is an allegory or symbolical picture of Christendom, and especially of Roman Christendom, from the birth of Christ unto the end. It symbolises the social, political, and ecclesiastical forces which have made history, are still making it, and will continue to make it unto the end, rather than history itself; although, of course, the characters which appear from time to time upon the panorama of history are in their day the living agents of those forces, and so they, and the state of things effected by them, are partial fulfilments of the predictions of the prophecy.

It is so essential for the understanding of this scheme of interpretation that the reader should all along have before him a clear conception of the history of Christendom, and especially of the relations which have existed all through the ages between Christ and Cæsar, the Church and the World-power, that the first chapter of this book will be a general sketch of the history of Christendom, reprinted from

my "Apocalypse with a Commentary," which is now nearly out of print.

And for the same reason the second chapter will also be a reprint of a portion of another little book entitled "The Divine Forecast of the Corruption of Christianity a Miraculous Evidence of its Truth."

If the reader will study carefully these two introductory chapters, he will follow more easily the practical interpretation of the whole Prophecy which symbolises for all time, past, present, and future, the warfare of Christ and His Church with the Powers of the World.

The reader will find some repetitions and passages quoted more than once in the text and in the notes, but these are inserted to strengthen the argument in which they occur, and to save the trouble of referring to some previous chapter.

I commend this book to the earnest study of the faithful Christian, to whatever Church or sect he may belong. The Revelation was given for him, and will comfort him with the assurance that his own salvation cannot be endangered by any sins or cruelties of his Church or sect, but depends solely upon his own faith in Christ, his love of God, and his pure and Christian life.

WINCHESTER, 1900.

LIST OF ANCIENT WRITERS QUOTED IN THE NOTES

Ignatius, A.D. 70—107.
Clemens Romanus, A.D. 93—101.
Justin Martyr, A.D. 156—166.
Irenæus, A.D. 178—203.
Victorinus, Bishop in the 3rd century.
Hippolytus, Bishop and martyr in the 3rd century.
Julius Africanus, Christian writer in the 3rd century.
Isidorus Pelusius, the most celebrated disciple of Chrysostom in the 5th century.
Andreas Cæsariensis, Bishop in the 7th century.
Bede, the most illustrious and learned divine of Saxon England, A.D. 673—735.
Ambrosius, French Benedictine monk ; died A.D. 778.
Aretas, Bishop in the 10th century.
Petrus Blesensis, a learned divine in the 12th century ; invited to England by the King and made Archdeacon of Bath.
Bertrandus, a learned Roman Catholic writer in the 16th century.
Bullinger, a Swiss reformer in the 16th century. In consequence of his high reputation during the progress of the Reformation, many of his works were published in England.
Mede, a most learned and judicious writer on the Apocalypse in the 17th century.
Whiston, Sir Isaac Newton's successor at Cambridge.

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A PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ROMAN CHRISTENDOM, FROM THE AGE OF ST. JOHN TO THE PRESENT DAY

According to the writers of the naturalistic school, the Apocalypse was intended by its author to be an allegorical picture of events which he conceived to be close at hand, of the fortunes of the Church in the Roman world up to the time of the Second Advent of Christ, of the destruction of all His enemies, and of the final establishment of His Kingdom. Even, therefore, upon naturalistic principles of interpretation—that is to say, regarding the prophecy simply as the unaided human effort of the imagination of St. John—we should be justified in limiting the area of the prophecy, so far as it is intended to be a prediction of historical events, within the confines of the Roman world of the first century of our era. It is natural to expect in such a work warnings and exhortations applicable to all times and to all men in every part of the world ; but, as a prediction intended by its manifest fulfilment to prove the super-

natural origin of Christianity, it is equally natural to suppose that it should refer chiefly, if not exclusively, to the Roman world of the Apostle. What then has been the extent and the history of that Roman world?

For about three hundred years from the time when the Apocalypse was written, the Roman world comprised Britain and the whole of Europe up to the Rhine and Danube; Africa north of the range of the Atlas; and Western Asia as far as the Euxine and Caspian seas. "The whole of the Empire was grouped round the Mediterranean, and Rome by nature and by its position was the centre of this extensive territory. . . . Within these limits no state preserved its independence. Its government and its language were exchanged for Roman. Every successive attempt of the Roman Emperors had been directed towards the complete uniformity and the perfect centralisation of the numerous and heterogeneous elements of which their unwieldy dominions consisted. Even the Christian Church imbibed much of the same spirit, and helped on the general result. To the thought of the Roman, whether civil or ecclesiastical, all 'form was formless, order orderless,' save what had grown up under the shade of Rome, and submitted to its bidding."[1]

Such was the extent and condition of the Roman world during the first four centuries of our era; and such already, during the latter part of this period, was the influence of the Christian Church in amalgamating its different races, and consolidating the Imperial power. Of what, then, was this vast Empire the result? and to what state of things did it lead?

Freeman, in his interesting "General Sketch," answers these questions for us: "The nations which have stood out foremost among all have been the Greeks, the Romans, and the Teutons. And among these it is the Romans who form

[1] Brewer's *Elementary Atlas*, &c., p. 1.

the centre of the whole story. Rome alone founded a universal empire in which all earlier history loses itself, and out of which all later history grew. That Empire, at the time of its greatest extent, took in the whole of what was then the civilised world: that is to say, the countries round about the Mediterranean Sea, alike in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Roman Empire was formed by gradually bringing under its dominion all the countries within those bounds which had already begun to have some history, those which we may call the states of the Old World. And it was out of the breaking up of the great dominion of Rome that what we may call the states of the New World, the kingdoms and nations of modern Europe, gradually took their rise." [1]

We may divide the history of the Roman world, therefore—which is, speaking generally, the European world of our day, or what we may call Roman Christendom—into several periods, being guided in making those divisions by the relations existing in each section of the history between the ruling powers of the world and the Christian Church.

1. Thus we have first a period of about three hundred years during which the Emperors of Rome were Pagans, and violence and persecution were often resorted to by the Roman magistrates to check the rapid spreading of Christianity among all classes of Roman citizens. These were the ages of open and violent persecution—that is, of Pagan persecution, during which the Church, as an army of martyrs, fought her way to supreme dominion as the established religion of the Empire.

During this period the leaven was leavening the great fermenting mass; the little mustard-seed was growing into the greatest among herbs. The religion of Him Who was crucified in a Roman Province, by Roman soldiers, and at

[1] Freeman's *General Sketch*, p. 15.

the sentence of a Roman Procurator, was becoming the religion of the Roman Empire.

It is most interesting to observe how, during this period, the mightiest enemy of the Gospel—the most gigantic, and irresistible, and enduring worldly power which has ever appeared upon the earth—became unconsciously one of the most indispensable instruments in the hands of God for the foundation of His religion in the world. The Roman Empire assisted the missionaries, assigned the limits, prepared the dioceses, and, humanly speaking, rendered possible the Catholicity of the Christian Church. This has been admirably pointed out by Conybeare and Howson and many other Christian writers, but we may give it in the words of Renan: "Primitive Christian missions," he says . . . "find both theatre and limit in the Roman Empire. . . . The Roman world became the Christian world; and there is a sense in which we may say that the founders of the Empire were the founders of the Christian monarchy, or at least that they determined its outline and area. Every province conquered by the Roman Empire was a province conquered for Christianity. . . . The unity of the Empire was the condition precedent to any great religious proselytism which should set itself above nationalities. In the fourth century the Empire felt this fully; it became Christian; it saw that Christianity was the religion which it had made without knowing it, the religion bounded by its frontiers, identified with itself, capable of infusing into it a second life."[1]

And it has been justly pointed out by Freeman, in his essay on the Holy Roman Empire, that Christianity, throughout its history, has been for the most part confined to the limits of the Roman Empire. "Christianity," he says, "became the religion of the Roman Empire, universal

[1] Renan's *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 18, 19.

within its limits, but making hardly any progress beyond them. And so it is to this day. Christianity remains all but exclusively the religion of Europe and of European colonies : that is, of those nations which either formed part of the Roman Empire, or came within the range of Rome's civilising influence. Thus the Empire, which once had been the bitterest foe of the Gospel, now became inseparably connected with its profession. The heathen sanctity which had once hedged in the Emperor was now exchanged for a sanctity of another kind. The High Pontiff of Pagan Rome passed by easy steps into the Anointed of the Lord, the Temporal Chief of Christendom." [1]

2. From the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire, in the beginning of the fourth century, until the coronation of Charlemagne as Emperor of the West, at the end of the eighth, we have a second period, marked chiefly by these events : the removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople, soon followed by the separation of the Western from the Eastern, the Latin from the Greek Empire ; the gradual decline of the Empire of the West ; its extinction for three centuries, and the substitution in its place for a short time of the Ostrogothic kingdom ; and the gradual, but in the end complete, sweeping away of the civilisation of the western part of the Empire by the inundations of those hardier races which came down wave after wave upon its rich provinces and effected permanent settlements in them. These races were Pagans, but were soon converted to Christianity, and became the founders of the great kingdoms of Roman Christendom. Their gradual settlement in the western provinces ; their complete destruction of Roman power, wealth and civilisation, even while they preserved its name, prestige, religion, laws, and language ; their uncon-

[1] *Historical Essays*, vi. p. 140.

sciousness of the amazing changes they were bringing about, and the results which were to follow them ; their entire subjection to the religion of the Empire which they had so completely overthrown, and their theoretical acknowledgment of the Imperial authority, even while its real power in the West was passing into their own hands—a theory which was to end in the resurrection of Rome as the source and centre of all civil and ecclesiastical authority, as the head of a mighty republic of independent kingdoms, destined to become the leaders, the rulers, the teachers, the civilisers of the whole world : these characteristics of our second period in the history of Roman Christendom, that period of transition, during which the strong roots of a tree were deeply struck into the soil of Europe, a tree whose branches were eventually to overshadow the whole earth ;—these features of this period, seen in retrospect across an interval of more than a thousand years, make it appear to us, as it probably was, quite unique in the history of the human race.

During this period, then, the foundations of mediæval and modern Roman Christendom were laid ; the city of Rome lost and regained its power, and thus became again the seat of all civil and ecclesiastical authority ; and that partly united, partly divided Empire of Kingdoms was formed, which Gibbon calls "the Great Republic of the West."

The final result was the formation of the most marvellous and all-powerful Hierarchy which has ever appeared upon the earth.

But during this same period another wave of conquest of an entirely different character passed over the Eastern or Greek portion of the Empire, and for a time threatened to overthrow the whole.

The prophets of Islam, with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, came down upon an Empire

exhausted by wars, and upon a Church rent asunder by schisms, and seemed likely at one time to be about to sweep Christianity itself from the face of the earth. Unlike the vigorous but unlettered conquerors of the West, who rapidly and enthusiastically adopted the religion of those whom they had conquered, these Arabian warriors were the fanatical propagators of a creed which, without wholly rejecting the authority either of Moses or of Christ, inculcated many of their sublime doctrines and moral precepts, while it held out to its adherents a sensual Paradise as the reward of faith and valour. "The grossly sensual character of Mohammed's paradise constitutes, perhaps, the greatest blemish in his religious system, and has exerted a debasing influence over all the countries where it has acquired an ascendency." [1]

The Moslem conquerors took Jerusalem A.D. 637, and erected the Mosque of Omar on the very site of the Temple. They soon overran the Eastern Empire, occupied the whole of Northern Africa, took possession of Spain, and, had it not been for the victory of Charles Martel at Tours, A.D. 732, would have made Mohammedanism instead of Christianity the religion of Europe. "Arnold ranks the victory of Charles Martel . . . 'among those signal deliverances which have affected for centuries the happiness of mankind.' . . . Exactly a century passed between the death of Mohammed and the date of the battle of Tours. During that century the followers of the Prophet had torn away half the Roman Empire; and, besides their conquests over Persia, the Saracens had overrun Syria, Egypt, Africa, and Spain in an unchequered and apparently irresistible career of victory." [2]

With the coronation of Charles the Great, the grandson of Charles Martel, A.D. 800, as Emperor of the West, our

[1] Brande's *Dict. of Science*, &c., ii. 554.

[2] Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles*, pp. 153, 155.

second period of the history of Roman Christendom comes to a close. It is of some importance to understand the real significance and consequences of this event, but its consideration will more properly form the commencement of the third period of our historical sketch.

3. This third period will begin with the foundation and consolidation of the great Hierarchy of mediæval Roman Christendom, effected by the Papal coronation of Charles the Great at the end of the eighth century; and it will naturally close with the commencement of the disintegration of that Hierarchy at the time of the Reformation.

What a strange period was this! How dark and chaotic when we look upon it from these ages of order and light! And yet how pregnant with great results! How full of vigour and energy! How deformed by ignorance, cruelty, oppression, superstition, and intolerance! And yet how ennobled by deeds of heroism, self-sacrifice, and enthusiastic faith! It was the age which gave us our parish churches and our grand cathedrals; the time when the foundations of that noble structure, which stood unfinished for six hundred years, were laid at Cologne. Many splendid ecclesiastical buildings were deformed and destroyed at the time of the Reformation. How many were built or restored between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth? We call the Middle Ages the dark ages, and with good reason, for they were dark. "No circumstance is so prominent on the first survey of society during the earlier centuries of this period as the depth of ignorance in which it was immersed."[1] True. But on a second survey we discern many gleams of light in the darkness, and we see the roots of many a vigorous, enduring, and fruitful tree taking a firm and lasting hold of the rock of Christian Faith. It must have been a terrible

[1] Hallam's *Middle Ages*, chap. ix.

time to live in, and yet our imaginations cannot help investing it with a robe of romantic glory ; for it was the age of chivalry and the Crusades, of which we may perhaps see the folly, but cannot help admiring the noble purpose and unquestioning self-devotion.

Now it is quite impossible to understand this period without having a clear conception of the significance of the Imperial coronation of Charlemagne.

We have seen already that, shortly after the removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople, a division of the Empire took place into Eastern and Western, Greek and Latin. Then came a time when there ceased to be any Emperor of the West. From the fall of Rome, A.D. 476, until the coronation of Charlemagne, A.D. 800, there was no Western Emperor. "Through the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries there was only one Emperor, who reigned at Constantinople."[1] The historical facts, therefore, which stand prominently before us during the three centuries preceding our third period, are the complete annihilation for the time of the Western Cæsar, and the cessation of the power of the city of Rome as the seat of empire. The men of that time had no idea that the Roman Empire had come to an end even in the West. All real power over Rome had passed into the hands of the Barbarians ; but the Emperors of Constantinople pretended to regard the fall of the Western Cæsar as "a reunion of the Western Empire to the Eastern." And even "the Roman population of Italy cheated themselves into the belief that the Barbarian King was merely a lieutenant of the absent Emperor. Such a belief might be a delusion, but it was a living belief ; . . . and unless we remember that the line of Emperors never ceased, that from 476 to 800 the Byzantine Cæsar was always in theory, often in practice, recognised as the lawful Lord of Rome and

[1] Freeman's *General Sketch*, p. 122.

Italy, it is impossible rightly to understand the true significance of the assumption of the Empire by Charles the Great." [1]

But when we bear this in mind it is easy to see the Pope's object in creating and consecrating an Image of the true Cæsar in the person of him who alone held all real power in the West, and who was able to make him entirely independent of the civil or ecclesiastical authority of the Eastern Cæsar. He wanted to make himself Universal Bishop, and therefore he wanted the support of a Universal Emperor, who should be his creature. As it was, in theory he owed allegiance to the Cæsar at Constantinople; he wished to renounce even this theoretical allegiance. But that could only be done by setting up a rival Cæsar at Rome; by making Rome again the sole seat of empire. The coronation of Charlemagne was therefore, as Freeman justly points out, a revolt against the authority of the true Cæsar. It was in very deed the resuscitation of Rome, after the lapse of three centuries, as the seat of empire, as the head of the Church and mistress of the world. "The existence of Eastern Christendom, as it is the great stumbling-block of the Papal theory, is also the great stumbling-block of the Imperial theory. . . . The act which placed Charles the Great on the Imperial throne was strictly a revolt—a justifiable revolt, it might be, but still a revolt." [2]

No modern writer has better shown the true character of the Middle Ages, or given a clearer historical picture of them, than Dr. Bryce in his work on the Holy Roman Empire, from its rise in the person of Charles the Great, A.D. 800, until its fall in that of Francis the Second, A.D. 1806.

The founding of this Empire, though in theory only the continuance of the Empire of Augustus, was in reality the

[1] Freeman, Essay vi. 142. [2] *Ibid.*

consolidation of the great Hierarchy of Roman Christendom. It was a real resurrection of the fallen Cæsar of Rome. "The strong hand of the first Frankish Emperor raises the fallen image and bids the nations bow down to it once more."[1] True. But it was, as Dr. Bryce shows further on, a stronger hand that enabled him to do so. The Empire was "an institution created by and embodying a wonderful system of ideas."[2] But these ideas were the moving forces of society in that age; and they were closely allied to another set of ideas which appealed to the hopes and fears of man in another world, as well as in this. "The Papacy, whose spiritual power was itself the offspring of Rome's temporal power, evoked the phantom of her parent."[3]

Speaking of this resurrection of the dead Empire by the Papacy, Renan says: "The masterpiece of her policy was her alliance with the Carlovingian House, and the bold stroke by which she revived in that family the Empire which had been dead for 300 years. The Church of Rome then lifts herself up, more powerful than ever, and again, for eight centuries more, becomes the centre of all Western politics and life."[4] Speaking of "the Empire of elder Rome," just before this revival, Dr. Bryce observes: "Now, as we at least can see, it had long been dead, and the course of events was adverse to its revival." Yet it did revive, and, although the men of that age regarded Charlemagne as one of the successors of Augustus, "the seal ascribed to A.D. 800, which bears the legend, 'Renovatio Romani Imperii' (the renewal of the Roman Empire), expresses, more justly, perhaps, than was intended by its author, a second birth of the Roman Empire."[5]

And now what was the result of this? It established the supreme dominion of the Roman Hierarchy; and so the

[1] Bryce, p. 369. [2] *Ibid.* p. 2. [3] *Ibid.* p. 372.
[4] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 199. [5] Bryce, p. 103.

history of the Middle Ages is the history of this Hierarchy. What were its component parts? It consisted of three divisions, three elements closely united in one body, and yet naturally and easily to be distinguished one from another.

(1). We have first those independent kingdoms which grew up out of the ruins of the Western Empire; those kingdoms which, because they were bound together by a common religion, and by the acknowledgment of a common head, are called by Gibbon "the Great Republic of the West."

(2). Then, secondly, we have the Emperor—the Holy Roman Empire, founded by Charlemagne A.D. 800.

(3). Last, but not least, we have the Papacy, the spiritual Empire of the Bishop of Rome.

The historical phenomenon, therefore, which we have to contemplate during the Middle Ages is the complete union of Church and State, the complete supremacy of the Christian Church in the Roman world; the establishment of that Church as a dominant political power during many centuries; a power almost unquestioned, or at any rate capable, up to the time of the Reformation, of putting down all rebels, all who dared to question its authority.

Thus, as Dr. Bryce says, "the two great ideas which expiring antiquity bequeathed to the ages that followed were those of a world-wide monarchy and a world-wide religion."[1]

We should observe here the marvellous imposture upon which the fabric of the universal temporal monarchy of the Pope was made to rest.

"In A.D. 476," says Dr. Bryce, "Rome ceased to be the political capital of the western countries, and the Papacy, inheriting no small part of the Empire's power, drew to

[1] Bryce, p. 91.

herself the reverence which the name of the city still commanded, until by the middle of the eighth, or at latest of the ninth century, she had perfected in theory a scheme which made her the exact counterpart of the departed despotism, the centre of the Hierarchy, absolute mistress of the Christian world." [1] But there had been a defect in the title-deeds of her estate. How could she justify her claim to supreme dominion either over Church or State in the West so long as there was a lawful Cæsar reigning in Constantinople?

To answer this question, and to establish this right to empire, a document appeared about this time called "The Donation of Constantine"; "the most stupendous of all mediæval forgeries;" "a portentous falsehood," acknowledged by all educated Romanists in these days to be a falsehood, but which "commanded for seven centuries the unquestioning belief of mankind." "It tells how Constantine the Great, cured of his leprosy by the prayers of Sylvester, resolved, on the fourth day from his baptism," to remove to Constantinople, lest his presence should impede the free exercise of the spiritual power; to hand over to the Pope the Empire of the West, and to allow him "to inhabit the Lateran Palace, to wear the diadem, the collar, the purple cloak, to carry the sceptre, and to be attended by a body of chamberlains." [2]

Thus the city of Rome became again—what she had been of old, but then for three hundred years had ceased to be—the head and centre of the Holy Roman Empire. "By the extension of her citizenship to all her subjects, heathen Rome had become the common home, and, figuratively, even the local dwelling-place, of the civilised races of man. By the theology of the time Christian Rome had been made the mystical type of humanity, the one flock of

[1] Bryce, p. 99. [2] *Ibid.* p. 100.

the faithful scattered over the whole earth, the Holy City, whither, as to the temple on Moriah, all the Israel of God should come up to worship. . . . She is, like Jerusalem of old, the mother of us all." [1] "The famous simile of Gregory the Seventh is that which best describes the Empire and the Popedom. They were indeed 'the two lights in the firmament of the militant Church,' the lights which illumined and ruled the Middle Ages. And as moonlight is to sunlight, so was the Empire to the Papacy. The rays of the one were borrowed, feeble, often interrupted; the other shone with an unquenchable brilliance that was all her own." [2]

Such was the Roman Hierarchy during the Middle Ages. Like all human institutions, it was a mixture of good and evil. Who shall say which predominated? It was a fearful corruption by the wickedness of man of a Divine institution, a spiritual kingdom, a society of men, "in this world, but not of it," founded by Christ and organised by His Apostles. Yet it stemmed many a torrent of evil, was the channel by which a thousand blessings were carried down to our own times, and was the messenger of pardon and peace to millions of sin-stricken hearts. "By the Empire of the Middle Ages was preserved the feeling of a brotherhood of mankind, a commonwealth of the whole world, whose sublime unity transcended every minor distinction." [3] "It is in great measure due to Rome and to the Roman Empire of the Middle Ages that the bonds of national union are on the whole stronger and nobler than they were ever before." [4] And "who has been able to describe the Papacy in the power it once wielded over the hearts and imaginations of men? Those persons, if such there still be, who see in it nothing but a gigantic upas tree of fraud and superstition, planted and reared by the enemy

[1] Bryce, p. 298.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 376.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 391.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 393.

of mankind, are hardly further from entering into the mystery of its being than the complacent political philosopher, who explains in neat phrases the process of its growth, analyses it as a clever piece of mechanism, enumerates and measures the interests it appeals to, and gives, in conclusion, a sort of tabular view of its results for good and for evil." [1]

It is better described in the language of Scripture as the "faithful city become an harlot;" "the holy city trodden underfoot by the Gentiles;" the great drag-net of God gathering within its meshes the good and the bad alike in the stormy sea of this wicked world, and irresistibly drawing them all to the shores of the Eternal Judgment.

Before going on to another period we must remember that during the Middle Ages the power of the Christian Church was falling as rapidly in the East as it was rising in the West. In A.D. 1453 the fall of Constantinople, the capital and last stronghold of the Eastern Empire, filled Roman Christendom with terror and consternation. And indeed during the whole of our third period, and that which we next describe, there have been times when it has seemed an open question whether the Crescent or the Cross should finally prevail even in the Western Empire. We have lived not only to witness the fall of the Pope's temporal sovereignty, but also to see the Turkish power, which hung so long as a dark cloud over Roman Christendom, reduced to insignificance, and apparently on the eve of falling into the hands of one who may be said in a manner to represent the Byzantine Cæsars, the Imperial head of Eastern Christendom. We have lived to see the Pope and the Sultan, once the two great powers of the world, the one powerless in his own Capital, the other trembling for its safety. And it is a remarkable sign of our times that the Pope has shown more sympathy with the falling

[1] Bryce, p. 395.

Turkish than with the rising Christian power. He could not, indeed, have a more formidable rival than a Christian Patriarch at Constantinople under the protection of a Christian Emperor.

4. Our fourth period begins with the Reformation and reaches down to the era of the French Revolution of 1789.

It was impossible to avoid mentioning by anticipation many of the phenomena of this period in analysing the events of its predecessor. The Reformation forms a strongly marked epoch in the history of Roman Christendom. And yet, as regards the connection of the Christian Church with the rulers of this world, it did not, at any rate at first, bring about any very radical change.

What were the causes of the Reformation? Chiefly these two: the increase of knowledge; and the luxury, worldliness, immorality, avarice, and supineness of the Church. To a religious mind in these days there can scarcely be found a sadder page in the history of the world than that which records the so-called Reformation of the Church. Never was there such a noble opportunity so ignobly thrown away by ambitious prelates and worldly-minded princes.

It is all very well to talk about the glorious Reformation. It ought to have been a glorious work. It might have been a glorious work, but for the blindness and obstinacy of Rome and the jealousy of princes. Had the matter been left in the hands of such men as Contarini and Pole on the Roman side, and Melanchthon and Bucer on the other, we might have had a Reformation of the Church without any disruption; a house strong and united, instead of one divided against itself, and therefore ready to fall, exposed to the attacks of the infidel on every side. For, even after the great schism had begun, it

might have been healed at Ratisbon A.D. 1541, but for the violence of Luther, the obstinacy of the Pope, and the jealous fears of France.[1] But the schism was not healed, and the result has been a hopelessly divided Christendom.

The prominent historical phenomenon of this period therefore, in connection with our subject, is the disintegration of the Hierarchy; the distribution and the slackening, but not yet the rupture, of the bands uniting Church and State in Roman Christendom. It cannot be called an irreligious period. On the contrary, as compared with the preceding centuries, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries may be called the ages of intense faith. Neither can we say that ecclesiastical authority was materially weakened, at any rate during the earlier part of this period. The struggle since the Reformation has been between one kind, or rather many kinds, of ecclesiastical authority on the one side, and the authority of Rome on the other. The idea of tolerance, and the substitution of argument and persuasion for anathema, involving temporal punishments or civil disabilities, had as yet entered few minds, either of Christian princes or of the rulers of the Reformed Church or of Protestant sects.

For a considerable time after the Reformation any sect which got the upper hand was willing to use the civil power to put down all opponents. The Roman Church and many other Christian communities would doubtless do so to some extent even now if they had the opportunity.

The great battle indeed of this period was not fought out with spiritual weapons only, but with the carnal sword. It was a period of fierce wars, of which the defence of Protestantism or Romanism formed the pretext, if not the real motive cause.

Neither did the Reformation diminish the power of

[1] See Ranke's *History of the Popes*, i. 163-165.

Rome, or her hold over the minds of men and the counsels of princes, so much as seemed likely at the first. Her tenacity of life is powerfully described by Lord Macaulay in his well-known essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes": "How it was that Protestantism did so much, yet did no more; how it was that the Church of Rome, having lost a large part of Europe, not only ceased to lose, but actually regained nearly half of what she had lost, is certainly a most curious and important question. . . . There is not, and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. . . . The Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour. . . . The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated her for what she has lost in the old. . . . The members of her communion are certainly not fewer than a hundred and fifty millions; and it will be difficult to show that all the other Christian sects united amount to a hundred and twenty millions. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

So wrote Lord Macaulay in A.D. 1840, even after the

French Revolution. Many strange events, affecting not only the foundations of the Roman Church, but also of Christianity itself as the accepted religion of Europe, have happened since that date. Their consideration, however, will belong to the fifth or contemporary period of our sketch of Christendom. For the present we are concerned only with the fourth.

We have, then, during this fourth period, a continuance of the Hierarchy under altered circumstances. The Holy Roman Empire still existed in theory; the Imperial diadem was still regarded as investing its wearer with a dignity higher than that of kings, and of a somewhat different character. But the Empire was no longer looked upon, even in theory, as a world-wide monarchy. Speaking of the manner in which men clung to this idea during the Middle Ages, Dr. Bryce observes, "Not till the days of the Reformation was the illusion dispelled."[1] Doubtless this was the case. The human mind could not rise against the yoke of the world-wide Church without endeavouring at the same time to dethrone the Image of a world-wide monarchy which that Church had set up. And yet the ghost of the Empire was only laid for a time, destined to rise again in the person of Napoleon out of the seething abyss of Revolution; again out of another wave of that abyss in the person of Napoleon the Third; and even yet again in the person of him who dethroned that monarch, and recovered the Imperial crown for the united German nation.

Although, therefore, we have divided our third and fourth periods by the great disruption of the Hierarchy at the Reformation, there is an important aspect in which we may regard them as forming one period, separated by a sharp line from that fifth period in which we are living.

In spite of the partial disintegration of the Christian

[1] Bryce, p. 90.

Church in the sixteenth century, it is a notorious fact that Christianity, as a revealed religion, as a religion for all practical purposes unquestioned, reigned supreme in Roman Christendom for a thousand years, from the end of the eighth century. Christianity was not universally accepted as the religion of the Western kingdoms until the age of Charlemagne; it then became the great ruling force and basis of all political power in those kingdoms, and remained so for a thousand years, the Reformation making no change in this respect, but tending rather to strengthen than to disturb the foundations of the Christian faith. The French Revolution introduced a new order of things; and with this great convulsion our fifth period must commence.

5. Our fifth period, then, opens with the greatest disturbance of the existing state of things which has occurred since the disruption of the old Roman Empire. We can only compare it to the eruption of a volcano. The fires had long been smouldering in the heart of the great mountain, and had shaken it from time to time to its very foundations. Yet its sides up to the very time of the first outbreak remained clothed with the accumulations of ages, and retained still the outward features which they had presented to the eye during many generations of men. Society approached the last decade of the eighteenth century attired in her ancient robes; she entered upon the nineteenth with new raiment, the old having been torn into a hundred shreds.

We shall understand better the nature of this great catastrophe, and its probable effects upon the future relations of the Christian Church with the powers of this world, if we contrast its moving forces with those of the Reformation.

Both these convulsions were caused by the reaction of the human mind against the tyrannical Hierarchy. And

had the work of the Reformers been completely successful, had they brought about what they attempted—a real reformation of the doctrines and morals of the Church without dividing it—Christendom might have escaped the horrors of the French Revolution, and the prospects of Christianity itself would have been very different from what they are at present.

There is a manifest connection of cause and effect between the sins of Christendom at the time of the Reformation and the outbreak of that Revolution which was the just punishment of those sins. And it is specially to be observed that the blow fell most heavily where the sin had been greatest. France sowed the wind when by her jealousy she prevented the healing of the schism, and afterwards attempted to stamp out the Reformation with fire and sword; she reaped the whirlwind during the Reign of Terror, and then became her own tormentor and the scourge of God to all the nations of Christendom.

The differences between the moving forces of the Reformation and those of the Revolution were wide and radical. The object of the Reformers was to restore primitive Christian doctrine and manners, to purify the Church, to strengthen the authority of Christianity, and the hold of revealed Scripture upon the hearts and consciences of men. The object of the Revolutionists was to destroy the Church and to shake themselves entirely free from the authority of every form of revealed religion. They literally took "counsel together against the Lord, and against His Christ, (saying) Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."[1] The state of things existing before the Revolution was indeed so bad, the yoke of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny was so oppressive, that many generous, truth-loving, and religious minds desired earnestly

[1] Psalm ii. 2, 3.

to see some change, and welcomed with enthusiasm the beginnings of the movement. But these sanguine spirits were soon awakened from their hopeful dream, and made to understand how easy it is to set the stone rolling ; how hard to stop the avalanche, or to guide it in its headlong and destructive course.

What might have been the result in Christendom, if the moving forces of the Reformation had only been allowed fair play, may be seen perhaps in miniature in our own highly favoured nation. The Church in England was reformed without being dismembered. Retaining her historical continuity from an age long preceding the Norman Conquest, and yet emancipated from the thraldom of Rome and cleansed of its errors, she exhibits to Christendom a model of what the whole Church might have been but for the obstinacy of the Pope and the jealous fears of Christian princes. And her providential escape from the usurped dominion of the Papacy and its claim to infallibility has left her free to remodel any part of her system from time to time in accordance with the advancement of real knowledge and the requirements of her people.

What has been the effect of the moving forces of the Revolution is best seen in the present attitude of France towards the Church and the Christian religion, and in the existence of that spirit of infidelity which pervades all classes throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, and is sapping the foundations of all time-hallowed institutions even in our own land.

The altered relation in which the Church stands towards the world since the great Revolution is well described by a thoughtful French statesman; and the prospect which he holds out to believers is certainly not encouraging :—

"During the last eighteen centuries Christianity has often been assailed, and has successfully resisted every

attack. Of these attacks, some have been more violent, but none more serious, than that of which it is, in these days, the object.

"For eighteen hundred years Christians were in turn persecutors and persecuted; Christians persecuted as Christians, Christians persecutors of everyone who was not Christian, Christians mutually persecuting each other. . . . After having had to endure proscription and martyrdom under the Imperial government of Paganism, the Christian religion lived, in its turn, under the guard of the civil law, defended by the arms of secular power. In these days it exists in the very presence of liberty. It has to deal with free thought, with free discussion. It is called upon to defend, to guard itself, to prove incessantly and against every comer its moral and historical veracity, to vindicate its claims upon man's intelligence and man's soul. . . . Religious liberty—that is to say, the liberty of believing, of believing differently, or of disbelieving—may be but imperfectly accepted and guaranteed as a principle in certain states; but it still is evident that it is becoming so every day more and more, and that it will eventually become the common law of the civilised world.

"One of the circumstances that render this fact pregnant with importance is that it does not stand isolated, but holds its place in the great intellectual and social revolution which, after the fermentation and preparation of ages, has broken out and is in course of accomplishment in our days. The scientific spirit, the preponderance of the democratic principle, and that of political liberty, are the essential characteristics and invincible tendencies of this revolution." [1]

The same intelligent writer sets before us the perils and prospects of the Christian Church in these latter days, in the preface to his second series of "Meditations." "I am

[1] Guizot's *Meditations on Christianity*, Preface to first series.

struck," he says, "by two circumstances in the actual state of opinions upon religious questions. On the one side, the sentiments contrary to or favourable to Christianity are defining themselves each day with greater precision. Beliefs become firmer beliefs; opinions hostile to them receive fuller developments. On the other side, vacillating minds are occupying themselves more and more with the struggle to which they are witnesses; minds earnest at once and sincere feel the disturbing influence of the doctrines hostile to Christianity; many again are uneasy at these doctrines, many demand a refuge from them, without finding it or daring to seek it in the essential facts and principles of the Christian faith. Between the adversaries of Christianity and its defenders, the discussion grows each day in importance and gravity; and with it also grows the perplexity in the minds of the spectators. . . . I have a mind full at once of confidence and of disquietude, of hope and of alarm. Whether for good or for evil, the crisis in which the civilised world is plunged is infinitely more serious than our fathers predicted it would be; more so than even we, who are already experiencing from it the most different consequences, believe it ourselves to be. Sublime truths, excellent principles, are intrinsically blended with ideas essentially false and perverse. A noble work of progress, a hideous work of destruction, are in operation simultaneously in men's opinions and in society. Humanity never so floated between heaven and the abyss. It is especially when I regard the generation now advancing, when I hear what they affirm, when I gather a hint of what they desire and hope for, it is especially then that I feel at once sympathy and anxiety. Sentiments of propriety and of generosity abound in those young hearts; they reject, when once convinced of their justice, neither the ideas which they before did not admit, nor the curb to which by the inspiration of the Divine law even human ambition does

not refuse to submit; but, by a strange and deplorable amalgam, good instincts and evil tendencies exist in them simultaneously; ideas the least reconcilable clash together, and persist in them at the same time. The truth does not rid them of the error; a light indeed shines upon them, but out of a chaotic darkness which that light has not the power to dissipate."

Here then we pause in breathless expectation, while "the sea and the waves are roaring, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth."[1] We scarcely dare to hope, yet we are bound to believe, that the ark of God, however damaged by the billows, will safely ride over this last deluge; that the army of Christ, however thinned may be its ranks, however scattered and demoralised by defeat may be its individual soldiers, will yet again be rallied for the final struggle, and will then march to victory under Him Who at the beginning "went forth conquering and to conquer."

The special danger to which we are exposed in these latter days is that of being deceived. Christians may of course be again exposed to violence at any time of great excitement or commotion which may arise. But faith has little to fear from violence, and is not likely often to be tried by it in times like the present. There is more fear of deception. The ordinary Christian is now deprived of the invaluable support of unquestioned authority and of settled public opinion.

It is a terrible trial to the ordinary Christian to hear the articles of the Christian faith spoken of as open questions. He is then in danger of being deceived. And this, therefore, is the characteristic feature of these latter days. The time has come when the chain which once bound Satan, and prevented him from so far deceiving the nations as to keep them

[1] St. Luke xxi. 25.

from believing in the religion of Jesus Christ, has been taken off by the pride and wickedness of man ; and so, disguised as an angel of light, calling himself a lover of truth, he has become a more successful deceiver than ever.

In the presence of such unprecedented dangers, it is high time that the Church should awake to a sense of her peril, and, setting aside all frivolous party distinctions, should gather herself into one compact body for defence against the common enemy, and should provide a refuge in her safe fold for all the scattered members of the flock of Christ.

The Church in this country, the old historical Church of Christ, originally planted in this land ; then subjected, but never willingly, to the yoke of Rome ; then rescued by Providence from that yoke, and the errors enforced by it ; then trained in a land of liberty to recognise at last the freedom of man's conscience, and so to become the most enlightened and tolerant of all the Churches of Christendom: this Church of England surely has before her a great future as a powerful witness to the truth, though, if need be, a witness in sackcloth. Never was she so politically weak ; never was she so spiritually strong. Her intellectual champions are boldly and successfully meeting the infidel upon his own ground, and turning his own weapons against him. Not hampered by any claim of infallibility, she joyfully accepts the genuine results of advancing knowledge, and shows how little the religion of Jesus has to fear, how much to gain, from the humble, reverent, and honest inquiries of the unfettered human intellect. And here I cannot forbear closing this sketch of Christendom with the words of Lord Macaulay in the essay already mentioned ; words which, though spoken of the superstitions of Rome, are equally applicable to the true Christian faith as accepted by all believers. They show how little any amount of

scientific research can affect the real grounds of the Christian's faith. First he speaks of natural religion, and observes: "It is not easy to see that a philosopher of the present day is more favourably situated than Thales or Simonides. He has before him just the same evidences of design in the structure of the universe which the early Greeks had. We say just the same; for the discoveries of modern astronomers and anatomists have really added nothing to the force of that argument which a reflecting mind finds in every beast, bird, insect, fish, leaf, flower, and shell. . . . As to the other great question, the question what becomes of man after his death, we do not see that a highly educated European, left to his unassisted reason, is more likely to be in the right than a Blackfoot Indian. Not a single one of the many sciences in which we surpass the Blackfoot Indians throws the smallest light on the state of the soul after the animal life is extinct.

"Then, again, all the great enigmas which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages. The ingenuity of a people just emerging from barbarism is quite sufficient to propound them. It is a mistake to imagine that subtle speculations touching the Divine attributes, the origin of evil, the necessity of human actions, the foundation of moral obligation, imply any high degree of intellectual culture. Such speculations, on the contrary, are in a peculiar manner the delight of intelligent children and half-civilised man. . . . The book of Job shows that, long before letters and arts were known to Ionia, these vexed questions were debated, with no common skill and eloquence, under the tents of the Idumean emirs; nor has human reason, in the course of three thousand years, discovered any satisfactory solution of the riddles which perplexed Eliphaz and Zophar.

"Natural theology, then, is not a progressive science.

That knowledge of our origin and of our destiny which we derive from revelation is, indeed, of very different clearness, and of very different importance. But neither is revealed religion of the nature of a progressive science. All Divine truth is, according to the doctrine of the Protestant churches, recorded in certain books. It is equally open to all who, in any age, can read those books ; nor can all the discoveries of all the philosophers in the world add a single verse to any of those books."

True. But as modern criticism may question the genuineness or the authenticity of those books, so, as we hope to prove to the impartial and diligent reader, the unfolding as time advances of the great drama of the history of Christendom stamps with the seal of truth the prophecies of those books, proving thereby that He who caused them to be written was that One who alone can see the end from the beginning, and speak of things which are not, as though they were.

The truth of the Inspired Scriptures rests mainly on the fulfilment of predictions which God only could utter, and so we say again, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

In this historical sketch we have divided the history of Christendom into five periods. What are the phenomena which obtrude themselves upon our notice when we look back upon the great picture as a whole?

We observe the Roman Empire at first a universal monarchy, and then divided into a number of independent kingdoms. We are struck by the failure of every subsequent attempt to establish a universal Empire. We are surprised at the survival of the idea of a universal monarchy long after it had ceased to be a reality, resulting in the creation at the end of the eighth century of an Image of the Western Cæsars after they had ceased to exist for three hundred years. We

mark the continuance of this so-called Holy Roman Empire for a thousand years, from A.D. 800 until A.D. 1806.

We observe also: The rise of the Christian Church. Its long struggle with Paganism. Its establishment and connection with the civil power in the fourth century. Its narrow escape from being swept away by the inundation of the Barbarians in the West, and by the armies of Mohammed in the East. Its subjection to the Bishop of Rome, and final establishment as the sole, dominant, and unquestioned religion of the nations of Europe for a thousand years, from the age of Charlemagne to the French Revolution. Its altered relation to the civil power after that convulsion. Its loss of temporal power and political influence in the present age, due mainly to its endless divisions, to the reaction of the human mind against its previous tyranny, and to the progress of free thought, combined with much lukewarmness, doubt, and unbelief, among all classes of society.

How has it fared with the city of Rome?

In the age of St. John and for several centuries afterwards we saw her the mistress of the world and the most formidable enemy of the Christian Church. In consequence of the removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople, and the devastations of the Barbarians, she became for three centuries an insignificant town, and almost forsaken. Then, through the influence of her Bishop, she became again, for a thousand years, the head and centre of all religious and political life in Europe. During that time her Bishop was a temporal sovereign, and the unquestioned head of Roman Christendom. He survived the Reformation and the French Revolution; but subsequent convulsions have stripped him of his temporal sovereignty, and made Rome the capital of one of the European kingdoms.

What are the present prospects of the Papacy?

The French Revolution has proved a more formidable

blow than the Reformation. Church and State were closely united for a thousand years; but they have rarely been on very friendly terms. Even the Emperor, the Pope's own creature, has often been his bitterest enemy. Dr. Bryce thus speaks of these two ill-mated lovers: "The Papacy, whose spiritual power was itself the offspring of Rome's temporal dominion, evoked the phantom of her parent; used it, obeyed it, rebelled, and overthrew it, in its old age once more embraced it (*i.e.* in the person of Napoleon III.), till in its downfall she has heard the knell of her own approaching doom." [1] "Of the ecclesiastical power the Empire was alternately the champion and the enemy. . . . The strife was keenest at the time when the whole world believed fervently in both powers; the alliance came when faith had forsaken the one, and grown cold towards the other; from the Reformation onwards, Empire and Popedom fought no longer for supremacy but for existence. One is fallen already, the other shakes with every blast." [2]

And of the fall of the Empire he writes thus: "Its fall in the midst of the great convulsion that changed the face of Europe marks an era in history: an era whose character the events of every year are further unfolding; an era of the destruction of old forms and systems, and the building up of new." [3]

On the present state and future prospects of the Roman Church Renan says: "The strange excesses to which during the last fifty years it has lent itself, this unparalleled Pontificate of Pius IX., the most astonishing in history, cannot come to a commonplace end. There will be thunders and lightnings, such as always accompany the great day of God's judgments. And this old mother, who cannot die yet, will have much to do in order to remain still possible, still acceptable to those who have loved her.

[1] Bryce, p. 372. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 389, 390. [3] *Ibid.* p. 392.

It may be that, to stay the progress of modern thought, which is her conqueror, she will have recourse to the arts of the sorceress . . . The Catholic Church is a woman: let us distrust the magic words of her agony."[1] He then contemplates the possibility of Rome's making terms even with the agnostic and the infidel, by practically representing all religions as a dream, and opening her arms to receive all, and to provide for all alike the satisfaction of their spiritual yearnings. He admits that it is unlikely that she will do so, but evidently considers that she has not yet exhausted all her resources, or prepared herself to resign her hold upon the imaginations and upon the hearts of men.

Such are the phenomena upon which we look back from the end of the nineteenth century; and such is the forecast of the thoughtful in these days as regards the future of that spiritual power which ruled the nations of Roman Christendom for more than a thousand years. It is impossible that any human being could have foreseen and predicted all this. But it would be very easy in these days to do what Dr. Kuenen and his school imagine Ezekiel to have done at the time of the Restoration from Babylon, or Daniel in the age of Antiochus; that is, to compose an allegory which should give a figurative but intelligible picture of this marvellous panorama of the past. And the Hebrew prophets would supply us with an abundance of symbols and images suitable to our purpose.

In a little book called "The Divine Forecast of the Corruption of Christianity," the author has imagined an impostor making this attempt, acting as Kuenen and his school suppose Ezekiel and Daniel to have done; an impostor, as clever and as piously fraudulent as Kuenen supposes Ezekiel and Daniel to have been, attempting to compose an after-apocalypse of Roman Christendom.

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 203.

He represents himself as one of Christ's Apostles living in the age of Nero or Domitian, inspired to predict the future of the City of Rome, of the Roman Empire, and of the Christian Church.

The following chapter is a reprint of a portion of this book.

CHAPTER II

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF PROPHECY

THE evidences of the truth of Christianity, as a supernatural religion, are of many kinds; and these will always vary in cogency according to the natural constitution of a man's mind, or the state of education and modes of thought prevailing round him in the age in which he lives. To one man the traditional or historical testimony to the truth of facts recorded in Scripture, whether natural or miraculous, will seem the most convincing; to another, the moral influence on society of the teaching and example of the Son of God. And there are many other converging lines of thought which may well produce in the fair-minded inquirer an overwhelming conviction that Christianity is a religion revealed to us directly by God Himself. But it is the object of the author of this book to show that there are in every age, for those who will diligently examine them, ever present miraculous evidences of the truth, in the fulfilment of Christian prophecy, in the proved reality of the forecast which Christ has given us of His Church.

Setting aside, then, for the present all consideration of historical and moral evidences, and assuming nothing beyond the fact that the books of the New Testament were written by Christians who lived soon after the death of Christ, let us examine carefully their forecast of

Christianity, the sketch they give us in bold outline of the future condition of the Christian Church in this world.

It is impossible, we may safely maintain, for any fair-minded inquirer, sufficiently educated, to rise from a careful comparison of the Christian prophecies with the history of the Christian Church during the last eighteen hundred years, without being thoroughly convinced that they are real prophecies which are evidently in the course of fulfilment; and therefore that they must have been communicated to the writers by a Spirit more than human.

A real prophecy must be admitted to be a real miracle. If it can be clearly shown that an event happening in our own times, or a state of things existing in our own modern society, was foreseen and predicted more than eighteen hundred years ago; and if it can be clearly shown that the prophecy could not possibly have brought about its own fulfilment, then it will surely be admitted that He who foresaw and predicted that event or that state of things was, since He claimed to be so, most certainly the Son of God.

Let us imagine that Jesus Christ had given in plain words to His Apostles the following account of the future fortunes of His Church :—

"My Church will have to struggle for many years with this great Roman Empire which now rules the world. But by-and-by she will convert so many Romans to the Christian faith that even the Roman Emperors themselves will become Christians. And then the Church will become the Church of the Empire, and the powers of this world, now so hostile to the truth, will become the supporters of the Christian Church, and even, contrary to all the principles of My Gospel, the persecutors at her instigation of those who will not become Christians, or who, being

Christians, dare to hold opinions contrary to those of the established rulers of the Church. But this state of things will be interrupted by the most amazing political changes in the Roman Empire. That Empire, in spite of all present appearances, will be so utterly destroyed by the incursions of barbarous tribes that an entire change will pass over the face of the now civilised world. This change will be so complete that it will cause not 'a mere change of government, or the substitution of one race of monarchs for another, but a total subversion of the property, customs, and institutions of the vanquished people.' Notwithstanding this great convulsion of society, however, My Church will go on increasing in numbers and political influence, until at last such a state of things will be brought about that this great city of Rome will become again the mistress of all those kingdoms which shall rise up out of the ruins of the present Roman Empire. Indeed, another Roman Empire, which for a thousand years shall be called 'The Holy Roman Empire,' shall be set up through the influence of a Roman Bishop, claiming to be My representative in the world, claiming to be the seat and source of all authority in Church and State throughout the whole Roman Empire. And I shall surprise you more when I tell you that My Church, thus firmly seated by the throne of these new kings and the Cæsars which she shall create, though still bearing witness to the truth that I am the Son of God and Saviour of the world, though still preserving My sacred Scriptures shall be in all her thoughts and acts as unlike Me as it is possible to conceive. Instead of being persecuted, she will persecute; instead of being, like Me, 'in the world but not of the world,' she shall be altogether of it; mixed up in all its intrigues; puffed up with all its pride; indulging all its passions, altogether given up to the lust of worldly power. She will, in a word, worship the world and the powers of

the world instead of worshipping Me. And I warn you all that the mystery of iniquity, which shall hereafter bring about this deplorable result, is already working even in the hearts of you, My first and faithful disciples; for it is the lust of worldly power, the desire to have the pre-eminence, to be lords over your flocks instead of examples for them to follow, which will finally change so greatly the character of My Church; and your great enemy the Devil will never cease until he has made these the characteristic vices of the rulers and people of Roman Christendom. This state of things will not, however, be without its uses, otherwise I would not allow it to happen. And it will have these two great uses: It will prevent My truth and My Holy Scriptures from being altogether swept from the face of the earth. The establishment of My Church as a political institution by the mightiest nations of the earth will prevent Satan from so far deceiving the world as to bring it back again to its former state of utter ignorance of Me. And it will also serve this important purpose, that it will be a constant trial for the purification of My faithful servants, who would often have lost their likeness to Me had they altogether escaped persecution for their testimony to the truth.

"It will come to pass, however, at the end of a certain number of years, from the time when My Church shall have been firmly established in the revived Holy Roman Empire, that her triumphant reign shall come to an end, that her judgment shall begin, and that those peoples and kings of the earth who have so long supported her shall begin to turn against her. They shall grow weary of her lying wonders, and understand the falsity of her claims to universal dominion; and then, finding that the masses of their subjects, not only from the spreading of infidelity, but also from a great increase of true knowledge, have no longer any

faith in her, shall begin to rob her of her worldly splendour, and shall leave her powerless upon the earth."

It will readily be admitted that such a sketch of the Church of Christ from its foundation to the present day, given by its Founder, would have been a real prophecy, proved to be so by its exact fulfilment. It would have been a real miracle, and so would have been an unquestionable proof that He who gave it to His Apostles was God. But so very plain a prophecy as this would have been open to many serious objections. The great objection to it, however, as one of the evidences of the truth, would have been this, that it would have appeared to many to have been one of the causes of its own fulfilment. If, then, it can be shown that the very same account of the state and fortunes of the Christian Church is contained in the Revelation given by Jesus Christ to His Apostle St. John by means of certain allegorical signs and symbols, we shall have in that book an equally real prophecy, and therefore an equally real miracle, an equally certain proof that He is God.

But it will be said: "The meaning of these signs and symbols is so obscure that they can be made by ingenious writers to signify almost anything, and so to appear to predict almost anything, and as a matter of fact they have been so treated."

Their meaning is indeed obscure, and the opinions of men as to their meaning have been many, various, and conflicting. But then all truth is obscure until it has been unveiled by patient investigation. And the signs and symbols of Nature, those phenomena which have been before the eyes of men since the beginning of the world, have been as it were dead-letters in many instances, until within the last half-century. They have been erroneously and variously interpreted, and a dense cloud of obscurity

still hangs over the meaning of many of the known facts of the most exact sciences even in these days; and yet no one questions the interpretations of those which have been plainly proved to be correct.

The same may be said of this wonderful book. Its language is very obscure. But why is it so? Not because it is a prophecy, but because it is a figurative prophecy. For the obscurity of a prophecy does not necessarily arise from the fact that the events it predicts are future, but from the circumstance that they are figuratively described. And a description of past events under signs and symbols is just as obscure to a man who does not understand their meaning as a prediction of events still future. For example: The fact that there will be an eclipse of the sun or a transit of a planet on such a day and at such an hour may be predicted by an astronomer in such popular language that the most ignorant man may know what he means; or he may use words so technical and scientific that only another astronomer may be able to comprehend his meaning even after the eclipse or transit has taken place. And so his language will be obscure to the uninstructed, not because the event itself is future, but because it is described in technical terms.

It is just so with the language of the Apocalypse. Its signs and symbols are nearly as difficult to understand after the fulfilment of the prophecy as they were before. Its signs and symbols are the technical terms of Scripture, and especially of the prophecies of Scripture. From which it follows that they cannot possibly be understood, either before or after the event to which they relate, by any who are not well acquainted with the older prophecies: for the meaning of the signs and symbols of the Apocalypse can only be known from their use in the Old Testament. And it will be admitted by all, who will fully

and impartially examine these, that they give a description of the state and fortunes of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire from the time of Christ to the present day, with details which could only have been known to God Himself; that the book which contains them is a real prophecy, and so its composition a real miracle, proved to be so by the fact that its predictions are being fulfilled before our eyes; and therefore that He who gives the prophecy must be, what He claimed to be, the Son of God.

And it is of some importance to observe that the Apocalypse, although it contains many predictions, promises, and threatenings of world-wide interest, is mainly concerned, as we should have supposed, with the state and fortunes of the Roman Empire, and of the Church in its connection with the Roman Empire, the world of Our Lord's day. It speaks, indeed, in language scarcely at all figurative, in language too plain to be misunderstood by the most ignorant and simple-minded reader, of the universal spreading of the glad tidings that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world; that He will one day call the living and the dead, small and great, good and bad, before His judgment throne, and then assign to all their eternal portion. But its main object as a prophecy is to describe, under signs and symbols taken from the Old Testament, the corruption of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire; the destruction of that Roman Empire; the revival of another modern image of it; the growth and establishment, at the time of that revival, of the most remarkable hierarchy which has ever been seen on the earth; and then finally the destruction of that hierarchy by those very powers who long supported it, and were in a measure identified with it.

With this preface, let us start upon our inquiry from the universally admitted fact that Jesus Christ once lived, and

that He founded a society called the Christian Church; our present object being to show the truth of Christianity, as a supernatural religion, by proving the reality and continually evolving fulfilment of the prophecies of its Founder.

That Jesus Christ lived and taught in Judæa, in the reign of Tiberius; that He founded a society called the Christian Church; and that He was put to death by the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate, can be proved beyond all question without going to the Bible. These facts are plainly stated by the Roman historian, Tacitus. He describes how the Emperor Nero, when suspected of having been himself the cause of a great fire in Rome, tried to throw the blame upon the Christians, and fiercely persecuted them; and he then writes these words: "Christ, the author of this name, was executed by the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; and the hurtful superstition" (thus, as a heathen, he speaks of our holy religion), "repressed for the present, broke out again, not only in Judæa, the source of the evil, but also in the city, into which flow together all atrocious and shameful things." Thus it is an unquestionable historical fact that, within a very few years of His death, Jesus Christ was acknowledged in the great capital of the world to have been the Founder of the Christian religion; that His disciples were numerous, and were after Him called Christians; and that they were a despised, hated, and persecuted set of men, even as Jesus Himself had foretold, saying: "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many fall away, and shall betray one another." A fact to which the same Tacitus also bears witness at the end of the passage above quoted. "Therefore some were seized first, who confessed; then, upon their information, a great multitude

were convicted, not so much upon the charge of having caused the fire as for their hatred of the human race." [1]

It is superfluous to add that it is an even more unquestionable historical fact that the number of Christians went on increasing from the reign of Nero until the time of Constantine, when, by the conversion of that Emperor, the persecution of Christians, as such, was stopped; Christianity became the fashionable religion of the Empire; the Christian Church first submitted to a temporal Head; began to form herself into a powerful hierarchy; and too soon commenced the system, which has continued ever since, of persecuting all who resisted her authority, or ventured to think for themselves upon any article of the Christian faith.

We need not, therefore, go to the Bible in order to prove the origin of our religion. It is notoriously and confessedly the result, in the history of the world, of the life and teaching of One who lived and died in Judæa, in the reign of Tiberius and during the Procurature of Pontius Pilate.

But we want to know what forecast He gave of His Church, especially of its condition and conduct in the world; what He foretold about the results of His teaching and the condition and future fortunes of His Church and of His religion in the world.

For this information we must go, of course, to the writings of His disciples. And, when we examine those which have come down to us, we find that some of them, the books of the New Testament, profess to have been written by His immediate followers, whom He commissioned to propagate His religion far and wide. One of them records a promise which, he says, Jesus made to His disciples while He was with them—namely, that He would

[1] *Tac. Ann.* xv. 44.

give them the Holy Spirit to comfort them during His absence, to strengthen and encourage them, and to fit them for the arduous work He had given them to do. Of this Spirit He said: "He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you;"[1] "He shall guide you into all the truth . . . and He shall show you things to come."[2]

Has this promise really been fulfilled? Are we sure from what has happened to the Christian Church during the last eighteen hundred years, and from what is happening now, that the Spirit which Jesus Christ gave to His disciples did show them things to come? We answer that we are sure of this, and, if we had no other evidence, we might fearlessly rest the whole truth of Christianity, as a religion sent from God, upon the fulfilment of Christian prophecy in the history of the Christian Church; upon the proved veracity of the prophecies of its Founder.

And this is one of the tests which He Himself gives us of His own truth. To the men of His generation He proved the truth of His claim to be the Son of God by doing, in His own name and by His own authority, works which only God could do. But from the nature of the case we cannot appeal to these miracles, more than eighteen hundred years after the time when they happened, until we have first proved that they did happen. And we can only do this by giving some other miraculous evidence of the veracity of those writings in which these miracles are recorded. And it must be admitted that we are bound to give miraculous evidence to the unbelievers of our own day of the truth of a religion which we affirm to be the result of a Divine Revelation, and to have been founded by One Who was more than human.

What, then, is the miraculous evidence, at present

[1] St. John xiv. 26. [2] St. John xvi. 13.

existing before the eyes of men, of the veracity of the words of Christ and of the truth of the religion which He founded?

We answer fearlessly, the manifest fulfilment of Christian prophecy in the history of the Christian Church, which has been going on for eighteen hundred years, is still going on, and will, as we believe, continue to go on until Jesus Christ comes again. This is the test of truth to which He Himself refers us in a prophecy expressly said to have been given by Himself: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." [1]

The Christian Church is a great and conspicuous fact in the history of the world. It is simply impossible to ignore its existence. To write a history of the Roman Empire and of the nations which have sprung from its ruins, and to say little or nothing about the Christian Church, would be like describing the solar system without mentioning the sun.

But the existence of the Roman Empire, and its enormous influence on mediæval and modern Europe, mainly through its intimate connection with the Christian Church, is, if possible, an even more conspicuous historical fact. There can be no question that the institutions and society of mediæval and modern Europe are mainly the result of the departed vigour but lingering prestige of the Roman name, combined with the ever-living power of the Christian Church and the marvellous hold which it has obtained over the minds of kings and people. It is, then, in the clearly predicted connection between these two naturally opposed forces, and the results which have followed from that connection, that we may recognise the Divine foreknowledge of the Founder of our Christian religion.

What, let us remember, was the state of the world when

[1] Rev. xix. 10.

Christ lived, and for several centuries after His time? Was it possible to discern in it, by any human foresight, the seeds of the great tree of Roman Christendom? Could the greatest human genius, the deepest thinker, the most acute observer of human affairs, the most profound or the most speculative of politicians, ever have conjectured in the reigns of Tiberius, Nero, or Domitian that Roman Christendom would be such as we have seen it, such as it has been described to us by our historians from an early century to the present day? Does Christ give a true and real forecast of Roman Christendom? And, if so, must He not be Divine? Is not such a forecast a real miracle, something more than human, something altogether beyond the limits of the profoundest human foresight? And is not, therefore, its constant and ever-developing fulfilment before our eyes a standing miracle, a proof, growing stronger and stronger every day, of the veracity of Him who gave it, raising up in our hearts an ever-brightening prospect of the day of our redemption, when His last words of rest and comfort will all come to pass in their season?

Christ emphatically taught that the kingdom He came to found was a kingdom not of this world. This truth He enforced by His general teaching and by several parables. He lost no opportunity of warning His followers that they must expect to meet with a cold reception and rough treatment at the hands of worldly men and the rulers of this world. They were not to be surprised if they were to be treated like their Master; despised and rejected, persecuted and slain by men. They were encouraged, indeed, by the assurance of success if they endured to the end. But what kind of success? Certainly not the acquisition of power and splendour in this world; but of salvation and immortal glory in the next world for themselves, and all those whom their teaching and example should rescue from a world lying in sin.

In the days of Christ, and for many years after His days, the world-power was represented by the mighty Roman Empire, and the present god of the world was the reigning Cæsar. It would be difficult to imagine anything which would seem less likely to happen, in the judgment of any one living during at least two centuries after Christ's age, than an alliance between the Kingdom of Christ and the Empire of Cæsar; between the Church of Christ and the rulers of this world. And yet it can be proved beyond question that Christ did predict this alliance between His Church and Rome; and, what is even more remarkable, that He foretold that this alliance would not save His more faithful followers from persecution or death for the sake of their testimony to the truths which He taught.

Let us first examine the forecast of His Spiritual Kingdom in this world which we have in the recorded words of Christ Himself; then what St. Paul incidentally foretold about the condition of the Church after his own times; and, when we have done this, we will endeavour to point out what must be the meaning of that strange prophetical Drama which professes to be a faithful description by one of Christ's Disciples of a succession of visions which he saw, and which were given on purpose to forewarn faithful Christians of that which was soon coming to pass, and to support the patience and the faith of the Saints up to the very end.

I. As regards Christ's forecast of His Kingdom, the first thing that strikes us is the precision with which He gives it. In His literal words, and in the Parables by which He illustrates His words, we cannot discern a single trace of hesitation or uncertainty. He distinctly states that He is a King, that He came into the world on purpose to be a King, but that His Kingdom, although it was to be established in the world, was to be in no respect a worldly kingdom, was not to be one of the kingdoms of this world. The subjects

of His Kingdom were, consistently with this, to be in the world but not of it, and for this very reason He forewarned them that the world would hate them as it had hated Him. He distinctly states and illustrates by Parables that He was going to leave the world for a certain time and then to come back to it again in the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the risen dead, just at the time when He should be least expected. He declares with equal precision that He should leave the affairs of His Kingdom in the interval in charge of those whom He set over it; and He warned them of the fearful punishment which He would inflict on those who, as He foresaw, should neglect this charge, or abuse their authority. His prophecies are most precise as to the rapid spreading of His Kingdom as an outward visible society of men, growing like the mustard-seed into the greatest among herbs. His doctrines were to spread from heart to heart like the leaven in the mass of dough, until they should have changed the character of the individuals and of the societies of men which should receive them. But He no less plainly intimates that the enemy would be busy in working against His influence, that His Church would be like a field of wheat and tares growing together until the harvest, like a drag-net enclosing fish of all kinds, good and bad, which the fishermen cannot separate until all have been drawn to shore.

Thus the Parables of the wheat-field and the drag-net clearly foretell the future corruption of the Christian Church by the intermixture in it of true and false disciples: the former forbids the attempt to separate them one from another, as being undesirable and dangerous, and the latter points out the impossibility of doing so in this world; while both Parables foretell their final separation in the end, the reward of the good and faithful, and the punishment of the false and the wicked.

And thus we see that Christ foretells, without the slightest hesitation arising from doubt or ignorance of what was coming, the rapid outward growth, the secret moral influence, the deep corruption from the reception into it of false members, and the final purification and complete triumph over the powers of evil of that Church which He founded upon the rock of faith, and against which He declared that the gates of hell should never prevail.

II. What do we find, in the occasional letters of Christ's Disciples, about the future condition of the Church after their times? They profess to have received their information from that Spirit which Christ gave them, and which, He declared, would show them things to come. Do their prophecies prove that the information they received was correct? Has that happened in the history of the Christian Church which they foretold? This is simply a question of fact. We have before us their writings and the history of the Church. Do they correspond in those particulars which they predict?

The most obstinate unbeliever in the possibility of prophecy must admit that, at any rate, what St. Paul predicted did really happen, however he may account for the prediction and its fulfilment. "I know," says St. Paul, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch."[1] "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats."[2] He elsewhere describes the state of morals which should prevail in the

[1] Acts xx. 29. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 1–3.

Church of the future ; the sad but literal fulfilment of which description in the history of Christianity, from a very early age to the present time, the unbeliever will probably be the last to deny. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." [1]

That this description is not meant to apply to the wicked heathen world of the Apostle's day is clear for these two reasons, that he writes in the future tense and uses the expression "in the last days," and that he describes these wicked people as being the professors of the true religion ; "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

It is also evident from what St. Paul says to the Thessalonians that he did not consider his own age the last days, although it is true that the expression may often mean the last Dispensation ; the whole period between the first and second Advents of Christ. It is certain that St. Paul considered himself fully informed by the Spirit that the great corruption of Christianity was a future and comparatively distant event.

The Thessalonians thought, from some expressions which St. Paul had used, that he expected the end of sin and the Advent of Christ to be at hand. He hastens to warn them that this was not the case ; that a great deal was to happen before that happy time ; and that fearful forms of evil were to be developed in the very Temple of God.

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 1.

It is evident that he had had a good deal of conversation with the Christians of Thessalonica on the subject of the future corruption of the Church, and the Second Coming of Christ to put an end to it. They had misunderstood some of his words, and therefore he writes as follows, to explain his meaning more fully: "Now we beseech you, brethren . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for (that day shall not come) except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth (will let), until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (that lawless one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: (even him) whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." [1]

There are several things in this remarkable prophecy which it is very important to observe.

1. The writer has evidently before his mind a state of

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 1–12.

things in the Church of the future which was beginning in its principles even in his own day; "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." The tares were already sown amongst the wheat, although they had not yet come up.

2. There was something in the condition of the world at the time which tended to retard the growth of the coming evil. For the prophet reminds the Thessalonians of what he had before explained privately; that there was a Power then existing in the world which made it impossible for the lawless and truth-corrupting Power of whom he was writing to establish himself in the sanctuary of God.

3. For obvious reasons St. Paul would write with great caution about the Roman Emperor, although he might speak more freely about him to his brethren in private. There can scarcely be a doubt, therefore, that he was alluding to the Roman Emperor, as the great restraining Power, whose persecution kept the Church comparatively free from false disciples.

4. He predicts that this restraining Power would be removed, and that then the falling away would begin; and the lawless, truth-corrupting Power would establish himself in God's Temple.

5. But it is quite clear that St. Paul has in his mind a state of things which was not only to begin in its principles in his own age, but also to continue, getting worse and worse, up to the very end. He distinctly says that, as soon as the restraining Power had been removed, that Power was to be revealed which should represent himself as above law and should claim the attributes of God. He describes his rise, his development, and his end. He begins to show himself as soon as the restraining Power is removed; but his full development is gradually brought about by certain distinctly specified causes: the powerful aid of Satan, false miracles, and deceit. The original

Greek of the ninth and tenth verses is very clear: "Whose coming is by the all-powerful working of Satan, and by false signs and wonders" (obviously not real miracles), "and by every kind of wicked deceit." He predicts that this Power, when fully developed, will oppose and exalt himself above everything connected with God, and will claim to be himself divine. "Who opposeth and lifteth himself up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God:" a prediction which may mean that he will deny the authority of God, but need not necessarily signify so much infidelity as this. The Apostle probably means that this remarkable Power would raise himself above all law, human and divine, and represent himself to be the source of all law and the origin of all authority and power.

It is further very important to observe that he is represented as rising up in the sanctuary of God and continuing to rule over it up to the end, until Christ destroys him; "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

We find, then, that Christ predicts in His own words the great corruption of His Church from the admission into it of many false and wicked Christians; and foretells that it will remain in this corrupt state, in which it will be difficult to distinguish and impossible or at least undesirable to separate the wicked from the good until the end of this Dispensation, when He will come Himself and make a final separation between them, assigning to each their eternal portion as the result of their life on earth.

We find that St. Paul, informed by the Spirit which Christ had given him, specifies some of the forms which this corruption would assume, such as enforced celibacy

and asceticism, combined with great pride and immorality; and he especially points out that this corruption will be caused by the influence of a person rising up in the very sanctuary of God, who will raise himself up above God and claim Divine attributes and worship as belonging to and due to his own person; who yet shall be most untruthful and deceitful in his teaching; who will gain influence over men's minds by pretending to work miracles, and by all kinds of wicked deceit.

Thus far, therefore, we have a general sketch of the future corruption of the Church and the causes of it; and, even if we had no more clear forecast of Roman Christendom than this, we should find it difficult to understand how Christ and St. Paul, unless the one had been Divine and the other informed by a Divine Spirit, could possibly have predicted so truly what was afterwards to come to pass in the Roman world of our day.

But we have a far more definite forecast of the future of Roman Christendom in the Revelation of St. John. He professes to have received it from Christ; and to have seen, while dreaming or in a trance, a number of remarkable visions. These were presented to his imagination and then described by him in words.

The Apocalypse is considered a difficult book, but in reality its visions are not nearly so difficult to understand as many of those we find in the Hebrew Prophets. The chief reason why most people think it so obscure is that they expect too much from it; they expect it to make them prophets; they forget that it is a forecast embracing a vast period of time not yet completed; a picture drawn in boldest outline, most true to nature indeed, but which will appear so only to those who look upon it as a whole. To the man who looks at the bold strokes of the artist in detail and too near to see their connection one with another, all

will seem confused and unmeaning. Neither is it reasonable to feel disappointed at not being able to comprehend the full meaning of the artist while his picture is yet unfinished. That part of the Apocalyptic forecast which refers to past or present time we may hope to understand. That which remains as yet unfulfilled we expect to find obscure, though still clear enough to guide us in our duty and to inspire us with comfort and hope.

We have in the Apocalypse an historical conception of Roman Christendom existing in the Divine mind as a forecast, and represented to the imagination of the Christian Prophet by means of pictures already drawn for him by the Prophet Daniel and others, and well understood by the earlier Disciples of Christ.

Before proceeding further, therefore, it will be well to observe that the Hebrew Prophets had clearly fixed in the mind of a Jew in the days of Christ the meaning of certain symbols. For our present purpose it will not be at all necessary to assume the authenticity of the Hebrew Prophets or the reality of their prophecies. For the sake of argument we might admit, what some modern critics who do not believe in the possibility of prophecy maintain, that the supposed anticipations of history, which we find in the Hebrew Prophets, only prove that they wrote after the events which they are supposed to predict, or so short a time before them that it was easy to conjecture what was coming. This means, when put in plain language, "I won't believe that real prophecy is possible, and therefore no evidence which can be produced in its favour will prove to me that it has ever been anything more than fortunate conjecture."

But we may leave this question as beside our present purpose, which is not to prove, except indirectly, the reality of Hebrew prophecy, but the meaning which Christ and His Disciples gave to its figurative language. For it is by similar

figurative language that Christ foretells the alliance of His Church with the rulers of this world, and her persecution through their help of the more faithful remnant of His followers.

We find, then, in Hebrew prophecy certain symbols bearing the most definite meanings, well understood by Christ and His Disciples, and, in fact, by all who studied the Hebrew Scriptures with any attention. Unbelievers may doubt whether they are predicting future events or describing those which are passed ; but the meaning which they attach to the symbols which they use cannot be questioned.

Whatever may be thought of the third chapter of Genesis, there cannot be a question that to the mind of a Jew it fixed the meaning of the Serpent as a symbol of the Tempter and great spiritual enemy of man. The same narrative also implanted in the mind of a Jew the hope that One born of a woman would some day arise to destroy the Tempter's power. Thus we have fixed for us the meaning which Christ and His disciples must have attached to two conspicuous symbols which we find repeated in Christian prophecy: the Serpent and the woman's Child Whom he persecutes, but Who eventually destroys him.

The chosen people, or Church of God, is constantly spoken of as a woman espoused to Him, and as a Holy City. And whenever His Church is unfaithful to Him or guilty of forming unlawful alliances with the Powers of the world, or of trusting in man more than in God, she is compared to a harlot, committing fornication against her Husband, or to some wicked city such as Sodom or Gomorrah.

These symbols so frequently occur in the Old Testament, and the meaning of them as relating to the chosen people of God is so universally admitted, that it will be unnecessary

to do more than refer to the following passages as examples of their use.

Ezekiel describes how God first chose His Church and made her His bride: "When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine." Then describing her unfaithfulness he says: "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown." "Thou hast committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours." "Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians." "Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea." And, lastly, after He has purified His Church by punishments, He promises to receive her again as His faithful wife. "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant."[1]

Isaiah uses similar language, and connects together the two symbols of a woman and a city, describing the corruption of the Church under the same figure of an unfaithful woman and a wicked city. Speaking of the Jewish Church, he says, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. . . . How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. . . . I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin . . . afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city."[2]

Jeremiah, too, expresses the deep and unfailing love of God for His Church by declaring that although she had

[1] Ezek. xvi. 8-60. [2] Isaiah i. 10-26.

played the harlot He would receive her again as His own upon her sincere repentance. "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." [1]

Thus, the meaning of a Woman as a symbol representing God's Church; of a Harlot as representing God's Church when unfaithful to Him; of the Holy City as representing the same; and of that City called by some opprobrious name, as representing the same Church when unfaithful, must have been most fixed and definite in the mind of a Jew in Christ's days.

There is another symbol, the meaning of which must have been fixed with equal certainty—the symbol of a wild beast for a ruler of this world.

That Daniel fixed the meaning of this symbol in the mind of a Jew cannot be questioned. There are modern critics who deny the reality of Daniel's prophecies; they deny that they are prophecies: but their reason for denying that he was a prophet proves beyond all question that by a wild beast he meant, and was well understood to mean, a great worldly ruler. These critics find fault with Daniel, not for using symbols insufficiently definite in their meaning, but for being too exact in his figurative descriptions of historical events. They say, "He points out the actions of these worldly rulers so precisely that, since prophecy is impossible, he must have lived and written after the events." If there is one thing, then, about Daniel absolutely certain it is this, that he constantly used the symbol of a wild beast to represent an earthly kingdom or a worldly ruler. It matters not, therefore, in the least, for our present purpose, whether Daniel's prophecies were real or pretended.

[1] Jer. iii. 1.

They fix beyond question the meaning of a prophetic symbol. They prove that in the mind of a Jew in the age of Christ a wild beast was the symbol of a worldly ruler.

But besides this, they fix, in the mind of a Jew in the age of Christ, the meaning of one particular symbol in the prophecies of Daniel, namely, that of a wild beast with ten horns. It is certain that both Jews and Christians in the first century of our era believed this symbol to represent what they regarded as the last development of the world-power; their last great persecutor, the Roman Empire; in whose time they expected God to set up an universal kingdom which should last for ever.

It was indeed impossible to take any other view of the meaning of this symbol, because the writer himself so explained his own language. After describing his vision of three wild beasts which appeared to him in succession, he thus describes the fourth: "I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: and it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." Then, after finishing the description of the vision of the wild beast, he thus explains its meaning: "Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns which were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had

eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." [1]

Thus, whether Daniel wrote, as Christians believe, during the Babylonish Captivity, or, as some moderns fancy, at a much later period, after the age of Antiochus, or even when the coming Roman Empire was beginning to cast its mighty shadow over the earth; his prophecies, whether real or pretended, prove beyond all question the meaning which Jews and Christians alike must have attributed to this symbol of a wild beast with ten horns; it is certain that Christ and His Disciples understood it to symbolise the last great development of the world-power existing in their day, and

[1] Dan. vii. 19–27.

destined to continue in a partly strong, partly divided form until the end.

It is quite conceivable, therefore, that a Christian prophet of the first century, writing out of his own head and without any Divine inspiration, might reproduce this symbol, with some modifications and additions which should make its application to the great persecuting Roman Empire and the Christ-opposing world-power, until the time of the Second Advent of Christ, still more certain and definite. But would any mere human foresight have enabled him to predict that strange alliance between the Christian Church and the despotic rulers of this world, which so soon tempted her to become the persecutor, by their help, of the more faithful remnant of her own children who had the courage to testify against her sins and to call her to repentance and reformation?

This would certainly contradict all human experience; and such an idea must have contradicted every preconceived opinion existing in the mind of one of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Just as Gibbon, however, looking back on the past, sees Rome like a mighty tree growing in the earth, and compares the nations of Europe to the branches spreading from its trunk; so Christian prophecy gives a forecast of the world-power from the beginning to the end under the already familiar image of a great wild beast with seven heads and ten horns.

Such a picture of the future, standing alone, would not by any means prove the supernatural foreknowledge of the artist. It is quite conceivable that St. John should have introduced into his forecast the symbol of Daniel, adding seven heads to the wild beast of the Hebrew prophet, in order to identify it more clearly with the seven hills of the Eternal City. But it is quite inconceivable that he should

have foreseen without supernatural light that the City of Rome was to be the centre of the Christian Church ; that its Bishop was to be the temporal sovereign of Rome and of an important part of Italy as well as the acknowledged Head of the Church ; that he would claim to be the source of all power and authority in Church and State, and the sole and infallible exponent of all Christian truth ; that he would sanction and encourage a system of ruthless cruelty and persecution ; that he would establish an "Imperium in imperio" in every European State ; and that he would place a yoke upon the neck of kings, under which they would long writhe with scorn, but writhe in vain, until the time should come when the great city, which both under its heathen and Christian rulers had long been drunken with the blood of saints, should drink the cup of the wrath of the Lamb and should be cast off and destroyed for ever by those very nations who had long supported her and had been partakers in the guilt of all her hideous crimes.

In order to feel the evidential force of the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse, let us imagine some one in these days, or at the time of the Reformation, attempting to palm off upon Christians a prophecy of his own. We will suppose that he pretends to have dug up from the ruins of some ancient city, or to have discovered in the library of some remote convent, a manuscript written in the first century of our era. That he may have a fair field before him let us suppose that the Apocalypse did not exist, and that there were no Christian prophecies extant except those which may be found in the other books of the New Testament.

Some modern critics accuse Daniel of being an impostor, who wrote after the events had happened which he pretends to predict. Let us imagine some such impostor

in these days, thoroughly familiar with the figures and symbols of the Old Testament, and determined by means of these, modified to suit the known facts of Christian history, to set forth a spurious forecast of the Christian Church from an early century to his own time.

He would naturally represent the world-power of the Roman Empire, and of the nations which have divided that empire between them, under Daniel's symbol of a wild beast with ten horns ; to which he might naturally add seven heads to tie his symbol more closely to the Eternal City. And now let us consider what other additions he must make to his symbolism, if he wishes to fill up the picture of Rome just as Gibbon describes it, as the seat of the Christian Church and the centre of the Christianity of the Western Empire.

The following are the facts of which Gibbon gives him a summary. The following are the component elements of Roman Christendom, for each of which he has to find a fitting symbol copied from the Old Testament. "In the eighth century of the Christian era, a religious quarrel, the worship of images, provoked the Romans to assert their independence ; their Bishop became the temporal as well as spiritual father of a free people ; and of the Western Empire, which was restored by Charlemagne, the title and image still decorate the singular constitution of modern Germany." "In the beginning of the twelfth century, the era of the first crusade, Rome was revered by the Latins as the metropolis of the world, as the throne of the Pope and the Emperor, who from the Eternal City derived their title, their honours, and the right and exercise of temporal dominion." [1]

Our prophet must add, therefore, some symbol to his ten-horned wild beast which shall represent the intimate

[1] Gibbon, chap. lxix.

connection which exists between the world-power and the Christian Church; and not only so, but of the Christian Church centred in Rome; of the Christian Church utterly forgetful of its great Founder's maxim, "My kingdom is not of this world;" of the Christian Church forgetful that she is the Bride of the Lamb, and may not forsake Him to commit spiritual fornication, that is to say, to worship worldly power.

The Hebrew Prophets will help him to finish his picture. They constantly represent the Church of God under the symbol of a woman, the Bride of God; they constantly represent the Church worshipping worldly power under the symbol of a harlot; they frequently give the Holy City some opprobrious heathen title when they wish to represent her as sinning against God. They call her a harlot, and they call her Sodom. What then shall our prophet do but place a woman on his ten-horned beast as the emblem of Rome from the beginning to the end of her history; calling her Babylon, because she has been a wicked city, ever drunken with the blood of saints; and branding her as a harlot and the mother of harlots, because she has loved worldly power more than God, and so has become the great corrupter of Christianity in the world, the chief cause of that wide-spreading spirit of infidelity which will ultimately bring about her own destruction, and will endanger at the same time the safety of Christianity itself in many of the nations of the modern world?

We may safely say, that if there existed the least suspicion that the Apocalypse was not written in the early ages of Christian history, we should have critics in these days who would pronounce it spurious and unauthentic upon the very same grounds as those on which they reject the prophecies of Daniel. The visions of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters give a picture of Christian times far

too exact, they would say, to leave a doubt that they were written long after the time of Christ, and certainly later than the age of Charlemagne, and the consolidation of the Papal Hierarchy.

Fortunately for the cause of truth, whatever question there may be as to the time when the Apocalypse was admitted into the Canon of the New Testament, no shadow of doubt can possibly exist about its great antiquity.

But our supposed after-prophet has more to do before he has completed his picture of the mediæval and modern Christendom of the West. Will not the imagery of the Hebrew prophet help him to describe more accurately the prominent figures of European history in their connection with the Church? How shall he represent the Pope and the Emperor, for surely they must not be omitted?

As regards the Pope, he has to find a symbol for one who is both a Temporal Sovereign and a Christian Bishop, and who claims to derive from Christ his power over all other Temporal Sovereigns, and over all other Christian Bishops: who sets up an "Imperium in imperio" in every kingdom; but who is at the same time a bold usurper and a forger of lies. He is a temporal sovereign, therefore for the sake of consistency he must needs be represented by the symbol of a wild beast. Horns are the acknowledged symbols of power; the Lamb is the well-known symbol of Christ; and deceit of all kinds is attributed to him who was a liar from the beginning, and whose familiar symbol in Scripture is that of the Serpent. We may give, then, the description of our supposed after-prophet in the very words of the real prophet of the Apocalypse, who thus forecasts the future King-Bishop, the future head of Roman Christendom: "I saw another wild beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke

like a serpent and he exerciseth the authority of the first beast in his presence." That is to say: "I saw the symbol of an earthly ruler, exercising temporal and spiritual power in his own kingdom, and usurping it in the dominion of others as the Vicar of the Lamb; and requiring men, at the risk of bodily torture and eternal damnation, to believe the lies with which the serpent-spirit of evil has inspired him."

Every feature in the description of this symbol finds its exact fulfilment in the Pope, and in no other ruler who has ever appeared in history.

He is a temporal sovereign, therefore he is a wild beast; he claims to act with the authority of Christ in temporal and spiritual matters, therefore he has the horns of a lamb; he is deceitful and untruthful, therefore he speaks as a serpent; he sets up the "Imperium in imperio" in every nation of Roman Christendom, therefore he is said to usurp the authority of the ten-horned beast in his presence; at the same time he supports every despotic ruler, restores the Western Empire and makes the city of Rome again the source and centre of all power, gaining his influence by false miracles and every kind of deceit, therefore he is said to make men worship the former beast and to heal its deadly wound by setting up another likeness of it.

The Holy Roman Empire may have been, as it has been well said, neither holy nor Roman nor an empire; but it has been nevertheless a most conspicuous phenomenon in the history of Roman Christendom. It has played such a prominent part in the affairs of the Christian Church that our after-prophet could scarcely venture to omit it altogether in his first pictorial forecast; although he might fairly allow it to fade away from sight in his later visions, after having once plainly brought it into

view by some suitable symbol taken from Hebrew prophecy.

What has he to describe? An effort made by the Pope to strengthen his position by an alliance with one of the mightiest of the rising powers of Europe; and to do so by availing himself of the still lingering prestige of the Roman name. This he did by crowning Charlemagne as Emperor of the West, and by requiring the kings of Europe to worship him as their head. From that time for a thousand years the Holy Roman Empire becomes an historical idea which, certainly since the publication of Gibbon's history and the interesting treatise of Dr. Bryce, could scarcely be left unnoticed by our supposed pseudo-prophet if he wished his symbolism to be regarded as a true forecast of the elements of Roman Christendom. To whom should he go, then, for his imagery? To the same Daniel who has supplied him with fitting symbols to represent the world-power of the European kingdoms, and the Prince-Bishop of the Roman city.

The monarch sleeping in his palace in Babylon sees the world-power from his own day to the end of time under the symbol of a colossal statue. His wise men cannot recall or explain his dream. Daniel is called before him and explains it. His own kingdom, and those which should succeed to the end of time, the whole world-power so far as it had anything to do with God's people, stands before him as an historical idea, symbolised by the statue of a man. He himself is the head of gold; and, after the fall of succeeding empires, the world-power of the latter days is divided between ten kings, who constantly intermarry but never unite so as to form one kingdom.

We are not now assuming this to be a true prophecy. We only use it to supply our supposed after-prophet with a symbol to represent the Holy Roman Empire as an

historical idea. But we must observe by the way that it explains the meaning of the ten horns of the wild beast. It shows that that number of horns is given, not as implying that there were to be exactly ten kingdoms in the divided Roman world, but to make the symbol consistent with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the statue which he saw having, of course, ten toes.

The king of Babylon was elated by this vision, and so we find him soon after, probably at the suggestion of his baffled magicians, who wished to get Daniel and his friends into trouble, setting up a golden image of himself and commanding all men to worship it, and threatening to throw all who refuse to do so into a burning fiery furnace. What a useful hint for our after-prophet! He wants a symbol for the Pope's creature, the likeness and copy of a great worldly power, that very true, but somewhat shadowy, historical idea in Roman Christendom, the Holy Roman Empire. Here we have it, then, ready made to his hand. An image shall be set up, a copy of the previous symbol of the world-power, and all shall be compelled to worship it.

Thus, then, our true prophet gives us his real forecast of the Holy Roman Empire under symbolism which our supposed after-prophet might naturally borrow from the Hebrews. Showing how the King-Bishop had gained his power over men by pretended miracles he thus writes: he "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image of the beast, which had the wound by the sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as

would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

We have been looking back upon Roman Christendom as an historical idea of the past; and yet we cannot regard it as altogether belonging to the past, for it still exists. The great Latin Hierarchy still exists, although it has been gradually crumbling away since the Reformation, and seems destined in the present age to meet with falls more severe than any which it has ever yet experienced. Our supposed after-prophet has made a very judicious selection of symbols, copied from the prophet Daniel and others, under which he has pretended to shadow forth the principal elements of the mediæval and modern Roman world; that is to say, the Christian Church centred in Rome with a King-Bishop at its head: a cluster of nations, who have divided between them the world-power of ancient Rome, and the healing through the influence of the Bishop of Rome of the deadly wound which the Western Empire received in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, the rising power of the European kingdoms and the Pope's creation from amongst them of an Image of the past, the Holy Roman Empire. He calls the Roman city Babylon, because she has always persecuted and enslaved the faithful servants of Christ; he calls her a harlot, because she has become the seat and centre of a Church committing fornication against the Lamb with the wild beast of worldly power; and he describes her as the mother of harlots, because she has been the chief source of the corruption of Christianity upon the earth. The nations of Latin Christendom he symbolises by Daniel's wild beast with ten horns, adding seven heads to tie his symbol more closely to Rome; the King-Bishop is a wild beast with lamb's horns, who speaks like a serpent; and an Image of the

first beast aptly represents the revived Empire of the West, the Holy Roman Empire.

Hitherto, then, we have been looking back with the eyes of our supposed after-prophet. It will strengthen our conviction that we have a real forecast of Roman Christendom in the Apocalypse, and it will at the same time prove the authenticity and early date of that remarkable book, if we go back in imagination and try to look upon the great picture as still future, with the eyes of the early Christians. And this we can do by means of their writings.

It has been already stated that the symbols of the prophet Daniel were well understood by the early Christians. This statement can be proved ; and in proving it we shall be able to show how they looked upon the picture by the light of St. John's prophecies.

Of course their speculations were rash in the extreme when they attempted to predict the details of future history. Nothing has so damaged the reputation of the Apocalypse in all ages as the wild fancies of would-be prophets. But this is not peculiar to the Apocalypse. Fanciful interpretations have been given at all times of the very plainest parts of Scripture, and the writings of divines in all ages are full of them. But this does not prevent us from feeling persuaded that the words of the sacred writers have a most definite meaning for all who will be guided by reason and common sense in their attempts to interpret them. It is the same with the figurative language of St. John. Like the plainer parts of Scripture, it can be made to mean almost anything by those who give the reins to fancy and prejudice, and neglect the commonest rules of interpretation which must be applied to all language, whether human or divine.

Let us see, then, how far the early Christians understood the symbolism of Daniel and St. John, and how far it really

was to them a forecast, a foreshadowing of that historical idea which we call Roman Christendom.

We cannot conceive that they should ever have understood the full meaning of these symbols. We cannot fully understand them yet; because, even at this late period of the world's history, the historical idea which they foreshadow is not even yet carried out to its final issues. The prophecy was never intended to be so plain as to suggest the possibility of its having caused its own fulfilment, nor so obscure as to prevent the diligent Christian from understanding it when fulfilled, and deriving warning and comfort from its forecasts at all times of danger and difficulty.

We scarcely expect, moreover, to find in any of the writings of early Christians an anticipation of the part which the Roman city was to play as the centre of Christianity in mediæval and modern times. The very prophet to whom the vision of the Rome of the latter days was shown was overwhelmed with wonder when he beheld it. "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration."[1] It would not have surprised him so much to see the wild beast, the well-known symbol of the world-power, drunken with the blood of martyrs. But he is amazed indeed to see a woman, the symbol used in all the other visions of his prophecy to represent the Church—a woman, such as he had last seen fleeing into the wilderness of this world from the persecutions of the serpent—appearing to him in the wilderness as the emblem of the city of Rome, a harlot and the mother of harlots, drunken with the blood of saints.

We do not expect, then, the early Christians to have so fully understood the Divine Forecast as to have anticipated

[1] Rev. xvii. 6.

the extreme world-worship of the Church of the future or her intimate connection with worldly rulers. But what did they foresee by the aid of St. John's visions? How far did they understand the meaning of his symbols? They were quite certain that the wild beast with seven heads and ten horns meant Rome. They considered the wild beast with lamb's horns to symbolise a mighty false prophet exercising worldly power. They saw plainly that the healing of the wild beast's deadly wound, and the making and giving of life to an image or likeness of the first wild beast, predicted the resuscitation of the power of Rome in the remote future after it had met with some severe fall. They had not the least doubt that the ten horns of the wild beast pointed to a division of the world-power, held by Rome alone in their own day, between a number of independent kingdoms yet to come. And they foresaw that all through, to the very end, at least until her destruction by the kings of the earth, the city of Rome would be drunken with the blood of saints. They were thus forewarned that up to the very end of her history Rome was to be feared by the Christian as a truth-corrupting, persecuting, worldly power.

The following passages will prove this. Irenæus lived in the second century. He had conversed with those who had seen St. John face to face. Hippolytus was one of the disciples of Irenæus. What early writers, then, are more likely than these two to have handed down to us a true account of the opinions of the earliest Christians about the Apocalypse and its interpretation?

Irenæus, in the thirtieth chapter of his fifth book, has occasion to speak of the name of the wild beast, purposely concealed by the Spirit under a mystical number, capable, of course, of representing a great variety of names. His words prove beyond all question the very early date of the Apocalypse, and its general reception by Christians as an

authentic prophecy; for they imply that the manuscripts of it were already numerous, and that in some of these different readings had already been introduced by the carelessness of copyists or the rashness of fanciful interpreters. Speaking of the number 666, he says: "This number is found in all the ancient and most approved copies, and those who saw John face to face bear their testimony to it;" and then he goes on to suggest how the number may have been changed in some copies, and that it is rash to decide as yet what name is indicated by the true number. We must wait, he says, until the kingdom of Rome has been divided, and then see whether any one of the names which the numbers will bear is suitable to the persecuting power which shall then arise. "These men, therefore (those who have changed the number), ought to learn and go back to the true number of the name . . . let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, let them learn to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself . . . having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation." After mentioning that many names are possible, he writes thus: "Then also 'Lateinos' has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable solution, this being the name of the last kingdom. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule." That which seemed probable to Irenæus, in the second century, is scarcely a matter of speculation to us in the nineteenth, to whom a divided Roman world and Latin Christendom are simply matters of past and contemporary history. Afterwards he sums up the question thus: "If it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the Apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long

time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."

In the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth chapters of the same book Irenæus writes thus: "Daniel too, looking forward to the end of the last kingdom, that is, the last ten kings, amongst whom the kingdom of those men shall be partitioned, ... declares that ten horns shall spring from the beast." "In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules the earth shall be partitioned."

Hippolytus, the disciple of Irenæus, thus comments upon the second wild beast with lamb's horns and the words of a serpent; and on the healing of the deadly wound of the first beast, and on the making and giving life to his image: "By the beast, then, coming up out of the earth, he means the kingdom of Antichrist . . . . and in speaking of the horns of the lamb, he means that he will make himself like the Son of God, and set himself forward as a king. And the terms, 'he spake like a serpent,' mean that he is a deceiver and not truthful. And the words, 'he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and caused the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed,' signify that, after the manner and law of Augustus, by whom the Empire of Rome was established, he too will rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself . . . . he then with knavish skill shall heal it, as it were, and restore it. For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, 'He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast shall speak.' For he will act with vigour again, and prove strong by reason of the laws established by him." [1]

[1] *Hip. on Antichrist*, chap. xlix.

"The wound of the first beast was healed, and he (the second beast) was to make the image speak, that is to say, he should be powerful; and it is manifest to all that those who at present still hold the power are Latins. If then we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes Lateinos. Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this was certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may be otherwise designated. But having the mystery of God in our heart, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by the blessed prophets, in order that, when these things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not deceived. For when the times advance, he too, of whom these things are said, will be manifested." [1]

Victorinus, in commenting on the second beast with lamb's horns, says: "He means a great and false prophet, who will do signs and portents and lies before him (the first beast) in the sight of men." And in the same way Irenæus, alluding to the second beast, says: "After this (after describing the ten-horned beast) he likewise describes his armour-bearer, whom he also terms a false prophet." [2]

And after enumerating some other very similar interpretations as prevalent in his own day, Andreas, the Bishop of Cæsarea in the seventh century, thus refers to the explanation of Irenæus as being the best: "But we think . . . . that by the beast, which in this place is described as ascending from the earth, a false prophet is signified. Which opinion is also approved of by Irenæus." [3]

Such was the forecast suggested to the minds of the earliest disciples by the prophecies of the Apocalypse. It led them to expect the Roman Empire, then existing in the full vigour of its united strength, to be divided at some

[1] *Hip. on Antichrist*, chap. l. [2] *Ibid.* chap. xxviii.
[3] *Bib. Max. Patrum*, vol. v. p. 612.

future time between many independent kingdoms. Has this really been the case?

It led them to expect that the Roman Empire would meet with a severe fall, from which it would recover in the days of the ten kingdoms, mainly through the influence of a great false prophet, claiming both divine and royal attributes, and prevailing through false miracles and deceit; who "with knavish skill should heal (the beast's wound) as it were and restore it . . . . who after the manner and law of Augustus . . . . should rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself."

Did the prophecy lead them to expect something which was not to happen? Let Robertson, Gibbon, Ranke, Guizot, Bryce, Freeman, and a hundred other historians, answer this question for us.

What did they think of the mystical number of the beast? They thought "the Latin one" the most probable solution; because the Latins were then ruling, and because they expected them still to rule until the Advent of Christ. The author of "Latin Christianity" may tell us how far they were right in their conjecture.

They saw clearly that Babylon, explained by the prophet to mean Rome, would be drunken with the blood of saints up to the time of her destruction by those who had long supported her. Did this give them a fallacious forecast of the future of the imperial city? The answer may be written in the blood of martyrs. The Church of Christ, centred in Rome, has, from a sadly early date, been stained with Christian blood. The eternal city, a harlot and the mother of harlots, has so trained her children in the lessons of persecution that it is difficult to find a sect of Christendom wholly free from the stain of Christian blood.

We dare not speculate upon the future, but we cannot shut our eyes against the signs of our own times. The

great Babylon as the centre of the Christian Church is not now supported by kings and people as she once was. The waters of popular support are drying up under her, and crowned heads are looking angrily upon her. The lovers with whom she has so long committed fornication are growing weary of her lies, and are longing to cast her off; and with her, it is to be feared, every other form of Christianity as an established and national religion.

This, we may conclude, is what the Spirit showed to St. John when He thus described to him the end of Babylon: "The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast (the world), until the words of God shall be fulfilled." [1]

Let us hope and pray that, as this is highly figurative language, the fall of Roman Babylon and the annihilation of her influence as an ecclesiastical centre may resemble rather the slow decay of some mighty forest tree than a downfall so sudden and so violent as the prophecy, literally interpreted, might lead us to fear. But we must be blind indeed if we cannot recognise in the diminution of her influence in these eventful days a sign of the times in which we live, and a fresh proof of the reality of the forecast which Christ has given us of Roman Christendom.

Much time has often been wasted in attempts to prove the great Babylon of the Apocalypse to be either Pagan or Papal Rome. It is enough that the prophet himself declares that he means the city of Rome. For history tells us what the city of Rome has been, from the age of St. John down to modern times, a city drunken with the

[1] Rev. xvii. 16, 17.

blood of saints, a persecutor of all who have dared to denounce her sins.

We need not tie down the prophecy to any age, so far as it is intended to warn the Christian of his danger; but we cannot fail to see in it a real forecast of the corruption and world-worship of the Christian Church centred in Rome, and so a real and standing miraculous evidence in every age of the veracity of the words of the Divine Founder of our faith; of the truth of Christianity as a supernatural religion, planted in the world by God, but soon fearfully corrupted by the pride and wickedness of man. We groan over the corruption of our heavenly religion, we feel the scoffs of the unbeliever, but we fearlessly turn against him the edge of his own weapon, pointing out to him the fact that the corruption of Christianity is, after all, the strongest miraculous evidence of its truth; that the history of Roman Christendom has proved beyond all question that He who gave us the forecast of it must be more than human.

We lament the great falling away of the Church and its world-worship, but we learn from the prophet who foretold it that the sins of a great visible society cannot affect the eternal salvation of its faithful members. God has His saints even in Babylon; He says, "Come out of her, my people;" and He promises again and again to those who love Him, and overcome temptation by the power of faith, never-failing help in times of need, and eternal safety in spite of all surrounding evil.

Sardis was a Church described as having a great name and pretension to be a living Church, although in the sight of God it was spiritually dead. But the death of the Church could not cause the death of faithful Christians in its communion, for, says the Spirit, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments;

and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." [1]

There is scarcely anything which is so strongly insisted upon and so emphatically taught in the Apocalypse as the absolute certainty of the salvation of all good and faithful souls, to whatever communion they may belong, whatever may be the errors and corruptions in which they may be involved from the wickedness of their times, whatever may be the judgments which God is inflicting upon the world for its sins. Whatever may happen, they have nothing to fear if they love and serve Christ. Because their hearts obey Him, they are the living members of the great spiritual Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom which is "not of this world." Our Lord foretells that there would be many false prophets and false Christs in the latter days, who should deceive many; but His words, "insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect," [2] imply that the elect cannot be deceived, that no error of their times, no religious shams of their day, can seduce their hearts from the love and service of Him Who died for them. The elect are represented in the Apocalypse as sealed [3] on their foreheads with the seal of the living God; they are measured [4] with the Angel's rod; they have their Father's name written on their foreheads; [5] and they are "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." [6]

The great Church of the future, the Bride of the Lamb, the Heavenly Jerusalem, will consist of faithful Christians out of every Church or sect of Christendom, Papal or Reformed, wealthy or poor, learned or ignorant; and doubtless, besides these, of many who have never heard the name of Christ. For Christ died for the sins of the

[1] Rev. iii. 1–4. [2] Matt. xxiv. 24. [3] Rev. vii. 3.
[4] Rev. xi. 1. [5] Rev. xiv. 1. [6] Rev. vii. 9.

whole world ; and "God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."[1]

We have, then, in the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Apocalypse two pictorial forecasts of Roman Christendom. When we come to examine these two pictures more closely, and compare them one with another, we find, from the context and from the position of each in the prophecy, that the thirteenth chapter regards chiefly the beginning, and the seventeenth the end, of that system of things which we understand by the great Latin Hierarchy. The world-power of the Roman Empire from the beginning to the end is symbolised in both by a wild beast with seven heads and ten horns. But the historical fact that the city of Rome and the Western Empire met with a most severe fall, and were nevertheless raised again by the influence of the Roman Bishop, is represented somewhat differently in each picture with special reference to the age chiefly portrayed by it. In the thirteenth chapter one of the heads of the beast receives a deadly wound, and is healed again through the influence of another beast who is marked out by many signs to be the King-Bishop of Rome ; a temporal Prince, the Vicar of the Lamb, speaking with the deceitfulness of the serpent, working false miracles, and exercising all the authority of the first beast in his presence ; setting up, that is to say, that "Imperium in imperio" which has always been one special and characteristic work of the Papacy. And it points out how this healing of the wound, or resuscitation of Roman influence, was effected by him : namely, by the creation of the Holy Roman Empire. The result of this is represented in the seventeenth chapter ; for in that picture the Roman city, made again the supreme centre of power and influence, is seen sitting upon the beast.

[1] Acts x. 34, 35.

The prophet does not see one of the beast's heads wounded in this vision, but the same historical fact is otherwise symbolised. He is told that the seven heads represent the seven hills of the Roman city and also seven successive developments of the world-power. Five of these, he is told, had already passed ; one was existing in his day ; and the seventh, when it should come, was not to last long ; it was to be succeeded by an eighth, which should be that special form of the world-power pointed out by the picture shown him of the Rome of the future. Instead of seeing one of the heads wounded and healed again, he is told that one of them yet to come would last but a short time, and then be succeeded by that head of power on which the woman would sit, until the time should arrive for her to be forsaken by her supporters and punished by them for her sins. Thus we learn to look upon the Bishop of Rome and the Roman city as not necessarily connected. In the thirteenth chapter there are symbols to represent the Roman Empire and a King-Bishop restoring it to life again by his influence, but there is no symbol for the Roman city. In the seventeenth chapter, on the other hand, there is no symbol either for the King-Bishop or for a fresh revived Roman Empire, but only for the world-power in its later development and the Roman city which it long supports and then destroys.

We dare not pry too closely into the future, and yet it is quite impossible not to see in these days that the loss of his city need not involve any diminution of the Pope's power as the head of Roman Christendom and the great false prophet of the Western Church. And it is consistent with this expectation that we find the same beast, with lamb's horns, joining in the last battle of Christ with the world-power, after the downfall of the great Babylon of the Roman city. Describing the final victory of Christ over

the world, the prophet says: "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war with him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."[1]

[1] Rev. xix. 19, 20.

CHAPTER III

THE APOCALYPSE A DIVINE ALLEGORY

In the previous chapter we have considered the forecast of the fortunes of His Church in the world given by Our Lord in His parables; by the predictions of His inspired Apostles; and by those symbolisms in the Revelation of St. John the meaning of which is determined by the language of the Hebrew prophets, the writings of early Christians, and the words of historians.

There can be no question that in chapter xiii. we have a symbolic picture of the world-power of Rome from the age of St. John to the present day; of the King-Bishop in the Roman City and his creature the Holy Roman Emperor. Neither can we doubt that the Woman of chapter xvii. represents the Latin Church centred in Rome, long supported by the rulers of Roman Christendom, and in the end dethroned by them. The meaning of chapter xvii. is less evident than that of chapter xiii. only because it has as yet been only partially fulfilled. These symbols will be more fully treated in the course of the practical interpretation of the Great Christian Prophecy which shall be now attempted.

The Apocalypse is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ:" that is to say, the Revelation given to Jesus Christ; "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." Thus the context proves that the Apocalypse

is not the manifestation of Jesus Christ, but His unveiling of something previously hidden; and therefore we are led to expect from a book with this title some kind of knowledge which no other book had ever before given.

It is reasonable to suppose that it was intended to be the key by which, in the latter days, the storehouses of ancient prophecy should be unlocked.

And therefore the ministering Angel gives St. John a command exactly opposite to that given to the prophet Daniel. To the latter it was said, "Shut thou up the vision;" "shut up the words and seal the book;" "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."[1] How different are the following words spoken by the Angel to St. John: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand:"[2] that is, the time is at hand when the things spoken of in the Apocalypse shall begin to come to pass. The vision, moreover, of the sealed book in the hand of the Almighty, unsealed and opened by Christ, and presented to the eyes of the entranced Apostle, seems, surely, to bear this general meaning, that the ancient prophecies, which were shut up and sealed before, were now unrolled and opened by the Ascended Saviour; that the Apocalypse was intended to be the key of those ancient prophecies which could not be understood by any creature without it.

Surely, then, we are encouraged to expect from the Apocalypse information concerning the future, of a kind which no other book had ever before given to men; we are warranted in regarding it as the key of prophecy, as the means of unsealing and opening that mysterious volume which the ancient prophet was commanded to shut up and seal.

[1] Dan. xii. 9. [2] Rev. xxii. 10.

And notwithstanding the acknowledged difficulty of the Book, and the differences of opinion expressed by commentators, we may safely say that the Apocalypse has always in every age been sufficiently understood to answer the practical uses for which it was given, the quickening of the faith, and the support of the hope of the Church. "Here is the patience of the Saints." [1] "Here is the patience and the faith of the Saints." [2]

The general meaning of the Apocalyptic visions none can miss. They have shown to the faithful in every age how Christianity was to be persecuted and corrupted; how its persecutors and corrupters were to be punished; and finally how, when all seems lost, the Lord and His saints will triumph over every enemy of their peace. This grand outline of the future has been revealed by the Apocalypse in every age to every studious and faithful reader; and such readers have experienced, in the comfort and support imparted by it, the blessing pronounced on him that readeth and them that hear the words of this prophecy; [3] but, as the work of a more than human Artist, the mysterious picture has ever rewarded, and will ever reward, the labour of more close and patient investigation.

We must next consider, How the Apocalypse was given.

And here again the Book explains itself. The Apostle was caused by the Angel to see a great many mysterious visions, and to hear voices explanatory of them. It is both useless and unnecessary to inquire in what manner the Apostle was caused to behold these visions. The Revelation was imparted by means of visions. This we are told. But we are not told by what means, or under what circumstances, the prophet was caused to see them. In some way or other, it matters not how, the mysterious appear-

[1] Rev. xiv. 12. [2] Rev. xiii. 10. [3] Rev. i. 3.

ances were presented either to his bodily or to his mental sight. He either saw strange sights, and heard strange voices, with his natural eyes and ears; or else they were presented to his imagination whilst he was dreaming, or in a trance. When God wished St. Paul to pass over into Macedonia, He directed him to do so by causing him to dream that a man stood by him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."[1] In the case of Jacob also, and Joseph, and Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, revelations of the greatest importance were communicated by vivid and supernatural dreams.

Other prophets received revelations whilst in a state of trance or ecstasy. Thus St. Peter learned that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to be put aside, by the significant vision of a sheet filled with clean and unclean animals, of both of which he was commanded to eat. And in many instances visions seem to have appeared to men whilst they were in an ordinary condition, neither sleeping nor in a trance.

It is quite impossible to conclude, with any certainty, in what condition St. John was when he heard and saw the things which he describes in this Book. He says, indeed, that he was "in the Spirit;"[2] and he states this several times in the course of the Book; which has led most persons to conjecture that the Apostle was in a trance, and that the visions were presented to his imagination just as we see things in a dream, only in a much more connected and vivid manner.

It matters not, however, for the interpretation of the prophecy, how the visions were given, so long as we bear in mind the fact that they were in some way or other presented to the eyes or to the imagination of the Apostle. This presenting of the visions was in fact the special work

[1] Acts xvi. 9. [2] Rev. i. 10; iv. 2; vii. 3; xxi. 10.

of the Angel. It was the mode by which the Angel was directed to impart the Apocalypse to St. John. The actual Apocalypse—that is, the actual disclosure of future things—was imparted, as we have seen, by God to Jesus Christ, Who then sent His Angel (σημαίνειν) to "show by signs" the future to St. John.[1] He did not give him a simple narrative of the future, which He might have done; but He sent and signified it (ἐσήμανεν), "showed it to him by signs," through the agency of His Angel.

It is of very great importance to bear in mind this fact during our study of this mysterious prophecy. We must remember that it is not a poem or an allegory composed by St. John. The Apostle distinctly disclaims having anything to do with the composition or invention of the imaginative elements of the book. It is a work of Imagination indeed, but of the Divine Imagination, exhibiting powers and beauties of creative fancy infinitely more lofty than the most sublime of human poems. But so far as the invention of the images is concerned, St. John has nothing to do with it. We are not to think that he was informed by the Angel what would happen in after-ages, and that he then sat down, as a human poet might do, and invented certain allegorical pictures, under which to conceal, from all who could not understand such language, the truths which he might otherwise have revealed by a simple narrative intelligible to all. No; in this case the Apocalypse would have been an Allegorical Poem intended to couch under symbols the clearer knowledge imparted by the Angel to St. John. And in this case we might perhaps have found amongst the earlier traditions of the Church many explanations, emanating from the Apostle in private, of the predictions here concealed under dark symbols and

[1] "Prophetia est prædicatio futurorum, id est, eorum quæ post erunt præsignificatio."—Irenæus, lib. iv. c. 20.

speeches. But we learn from the Book itself how far St. John was its author. He is merely the faithful and graphic describer "of all things that he saw,"[1] and the accurate reporter of the words which he heard. The imaginative portions of the Book, the invention of the symbolical images, of the scenery, and of the whole apparatus of the Allegories, is to be ascribed either to Christ, or to the Angel whom He sent, it matters not which; and the words spoken during the visions are to be attributed to the same source.

We must not then consider that the curtain of heaven was, as it were, withdrawn, and that St. John saw the realities which are behind it. We are not to imagine that any of the objects which St. John saw, except perhaps the ministering Angel, were realities. They may have been very like the things which are in heaven, but they were not those very things. We are not to suppose that even the Throne, and the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, were the actual throne of God and His attendant ministers disclosed to the eyes of the Apostle.[2] This idea is quite set aside by the fact that the Three Persons of the Trinity have each here their Separate Symbol: the Invisible and Eternal Father is symbolised by a Visible Glorious Figure seated on a Throne above the representatives of all creation; the Holy Spirit is shown as "Seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne, which are the Seven Spirits of God;" and the Son is afterwards introduced in a still more symbolical form, as "a Lamb as

[1] Rev. i. 2.

[2] Speaking of the vision of Zechariah in which he saw Joshua, the Angel, and Satan, Justin says—"Hunc autem ipsum propheta in revelatione sua non vidit, quemadmodum neque diabolum neque angelum Domini ipsis oculis, intra se constitutus (*ἐν καταστάσει ὢν*) vidit, sed *ἐν ἐκστάσει, ἀποκαλύψεως αὐτῷ γεγενημένης.*"—*Dial. cum Tryph.* c. 115.

it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes." And if even here St. John does not behold realities, but only visionary appearances intended to be their symbols, how much more must we conclude the same when we find him describing Horsemen, and Burning Mountains, and Locusts, and Beasts with seven heads and ten horns! In fact, everything, without exception, which St. John describes in this book is to be regarded either as an aërial picture, so to speak, presented to his bodily eyes; or, more probably, as an idea impressed most vividly upon his imagination during a trance; somewhat after the same manner in which we see and hear things during a vivid dream.[1]

Now, if it is true that St. John was a Seer and not a poet, that is to say, if the visions he saw were presented to him by an Angel and not invented by his own imagination, then it will follow that he may have been as ignorant of their meaning as anyone afterwards reading his descriptions. This was the case with Daniel: he saw, he heard, but he understood not; "I heard," he says, "but I understood not;"[2] and if so, then there is no reason why it may not have been the case with the Christian Seer also. It seems, indeed, that on one occasion words were spoken to St. John which he was forbidden to write down for the perusal of others: "And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."[3] These voices probably explained something especially intended for the consolation or instruction of the prophet; but there is nothing else in the Book to lead us to suppose

[1] "Non solo sermone prophetabant prophetæ, sed et visione et conversatione et actibus quos faciebant."—Irenæus, lib. iv. c. 20.

[2] Dan. xii. 8.

[3] Rev. x. 3, 4.

that St. John necessarily understood the full meaning of the visions, or that he was anything more than an accurate describer and a faithful reporter of the things which he saw and heard.

We must therefore set aside everything personally connected with St. John except the mere words in which he describes his visions. He was inspired indeed in the highest sense of the word: that is to say, he was under the most powerful influence of the Spirit; as he says himself, he was "in the Spirit." But the Agent of the Spirit did not dictate to him the words he was to use; he simply told him to write in a book the things he had seen and to send it to the Churches:[1] "write the things which thou hast seen."[2]

The principal part of the book is occupied in graphic descriptions of what the writer saw, and reports of the words which he heard. We must not, therefore, consider the mere words as coming directly from a spiritual source. The inspiration of the Apostle manifestly consisted in the miraculous presentation of visions and voices either to his senses or to his imagination, we know not which. The supernatural power was exercised in throwing him into a trance, and then causing him to see visions and hear words; but, of course, he then described those visions and reported those words just as freely and with just as much human agency and personal peculiarity of style and idiom as though he were describing some ordinary scene.

If, then, we would understand these visions, we must set aside all personal considerations of the author, and confine our attention to his language; regarding him as a faithful describer and reporter of things which he heard and saw.

Our first object must be, in the case of each vision, to endeavour to picture to our own imagination exactly what was impressed upon the imagination of the Apostle. He saw

[1] Rev. i. 11. [2] Rev. i. 19.

the objects, and described them for the instruction of the whole Church. We must endeavour, by studying his description, to reproduce the same images before our mind's eye. This is the first step. When we have accomplished this, we must endeavour to find out what spiritual truth or what historical fact God intended to couch under each particular symbol. And in this we are not to indulge in vain conjectures, but to search patiently for other passages of Scripture in which the Divine Author of the Book has used similar images : and when we find a symbol once explained in Scripture in a certain sense, we may not, without the strongest and plainest arguments derived from the context of the particular passage before us, deviate from that sense.

It has been necessary, at the risk of wearying the reader, to dwell at some length on preliminary matters before attempting to set before him any explanation of the mysterious visions of the Apocalypse. The nature of such a Book must be thoroughly understood before an interpretation of it can be appreciated. And it is hoped that the preceding arguments have proved these points : that the Apocalypse is a disclosure of things previously known only to God ; that this Revelation was first given to Jesus Christ as the Interpreter of God's Will to man, and that it was then conveyed in allegorical visions, accompanied by mysterious words, to the Apostle St. John by the agency of an Angel ; that, therefore, every image described in these visions is to be regarded as a symbol, under which some spiritual truth, or some future historical fact, is concealed, yet not so concealed as to lead us to despair of discovering it.

But the following questions naturally arise when we begin to study the Apocalypse. The Book is made up of a great number of different allegories : what relation do

they bear one to another? Are they each separate and isolated visions? Or are some closely connected with others? Is there any link which seems to connect them all together? And if so, do they jointly form one consecutive prophecy, commencing with the Christian era and terminating with the end of the dispensation, each vision relating to some one period of history, and its successor to the succeeding age? Or are they to be regarded as forming several distinct clusters of visions, each cluster revealing the future under a different aspect, and each also clearing up and enlarging the obscurities or the omissions of its predecessors?

In answer to these questions it may be enough to observe here that the visions of the Apocalypse, though all closely connected by a common subject, do not seem to form one consecutive prophecy, but often to synchronise one with another. The following may be regarded as the natural divisions of the Book.

The first three verses form, as it were, the title-page of the volume, and they have been already sufficiently explained. They give the character of the Book, and the name of the writer. And in the third verse a blessing is pronounced on those who hear, read, and keep "the things which are written therein." From verse 4 to verse 8 we have the Salutation of the Apostle to those Seven Asiatic Churches to whom he was commanded to send what he wrote; concluded by a direct and literal prophecy of the Second Advent, "Behold, he cometh with clouds;" and a declaration of the Eternity of God, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

In the 9th and following verses St. John states that he was in the Island of Patmos, and that, being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," he saw the vision of the Seven Golden Candlesticks, and received a message to each of

the Seven Churches of Asia represented in the vision by them; "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches." [1]

The letters to the Seven Churches occupy the whole of the 2nd and 3rd chapters; and with the 4th chapter commences an entirely new vision. It may be convenient to call this vision the Allegory of the Rider upon the White Horse. It comprises nearly the whole Book. It is a Dramatic Allegory, and consists of many acts and scenes, each of which may be regarded as a separate Allegory, with scenery and symbolism of its own.

The visions contained in this Allegory are those of the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, the Seven Vials, and several others connected with these; and it continues to the end of the 19th chapter.

The 20th chapter contains a description of the binding of Satan, and his release after a thousand years.

And lastly, in the 21st and 22nd chapters, Heaven itself is represented under the symbol of a Glorious City, the "New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven." The whole prophecy is then brought to a close by the Testimony of Jesus, the promise of His Advent, and the Apostolic blessing upon the Churches. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." [2]

It will be convenient to attempt first an interpretation of that portion of the Apocalypse which has been called the Allegory of the Rider on the White Horse; for the exhortations and solemn warnings addressed to the Seven Churches will be better understood when those visions have been explained, to many of which they manifestly allude by anticipation. This, therefore, shall be attempted in the following chapters.

[1] Rev. i. 20. [2] Rev. xxii. 20, 21.

CHAPTER IV

THE RIDER UPON THE WHITE HORSE

"AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." [1]

These words form the commencement of that series of connected visions which may be called the Allegory of the Rider on the White Horse; and the first cluster of visions includes that of the Seven Seals and the Seven Trumpets.

First, then, we must observe that the 4th and 5th chapters describe a sort of introductory vision or preface. The Apostle, having finished writing the Epistles to the Seven Churches—the consideration of which will be deferred for the present—is again thrown, as seems probable, into a trance. Either an aërial picture is then caused to pass before his eyes, or a miraculous impression is made upon his imagination; so that he beholds sights which, when we are speaking of him, we call visions, but which, when described in words by his pen, become to us Allegories: Allegories not invented by man's fancy, but created by the Divine Imagination. As Allegories therefore we

[1] Rev. iv. 1, 2.

must read them, and as Allegories we must explain them. And when thus regarded, their explanation is not difficult.

In every allegory, as in every parable, there are commonly many trifling details, which the judicious interpreter will always regard as mere accessories to the principal and more significant symbols, and to which he will therefore not feel bound to assign a spiritual meaning. We should expect fewer such accessories in a Divine than in a human composition, but some there always must be; since it is not conceivable that visible or material symbols should, in all their attendant circumstances, be analogous to some portion of the spiritual truth which they are invented to represent. If, then, the reader should observe that anything is unnoticed in this volume, connected with the scenery or circumstances of visions explained, he will conclude that the omitted detail is regarded as a mere accessory of the Allegory, and of little importance to the main design of the vision.

Now, one of the principal symbols of the Allegory before us is a Glorious Throne with a Glorious but unnamed Being sitting upon it. Round about the Throne four-and-twenty Elders are seated, and before it burn Seven Lamps of fire. In front of the Throne a glassy sea is outspread, clear and bright as crystal; and round the Throne are four living creatures, a Lion, a Calf, a Man, and an Eagle.

Of course the Glorious but unnamed Being, the most prominent Figure in this Allegory, represents the Great Eternal Deity;[1] but to set at rest all doubt in the matter, He is addressed as such by the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty Elders. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. . . . Thou art worthy, O Lord, to

[1] "Cujus hoc loco per sedentem in throno, nisi Patris Persona ostenditur?"—*Ambrosius in Apoc.* lib. 3.

receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."[1] The meaning, then, of this first symbol is determined: the Invisible and Eternal Father, the First Person of the Trinity, is here represented in an Allegory by a Visible and Glorious Figure. The Second Person of the Trinity is introduced in the following chapter. He comes up to the Throne of the Almighty, and takes a book out of His Right Hand. But He does not appear in His own real human form, but only by a symbol. "A Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes."[2] As soon as He appears, He receives adoration as God from the four living creatures and from the Elders.

The Third Person of the Trinity is twice mentioned, and each time under a different symbol. He is represented as Seven Lamps of fire burning before The Throne of the Father, and as the seven eyes of the Lamb. "And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."[3] "Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."[4]

Thus we have here that Holy Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, represented in connection with both; the Light of the Throne of God, and the Eyes of the Lamb.[5]

[1] Rev. iv. 8, 11. [2] Rev. v. 6. [3] Rev. iv. 5. [4] Rev. v. 6.

[5] Thus Justin says: "Οἱ ἱεροὶ προφῆται τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα εἰς ἑπτὰ πνεύματα μερίζεσθαί φασιν."—*Cohort. ad Gen.* c. 32.

"Unum Spiritum dicit septiformem, unus enim est Spiritus. Septiformitas autem perfectio est et plenitudo."—Bede xii. 357.

"Quid autem in septem agni cornibus nisi, ut ipse exposuit, septem spiritus Dei intelligimus? . . . Quod apertius Isaias propheta insinuat . . . qui unum eundemque Spiritum Domini, spiritum sapientiæ et intellectus, spiritum consilii et fortitudinis, spiritum scientiæ et pietatis ac timoris Domini vocavit."—*Ambrosius in Apoc.* lib. 3.

But what of the other significant symbols of the Allegory? What is there connected with God and Christ for them to represent? We have to assign some definite meaning to the glassy sea spread out before the Throne of God; and to the four living creatures, full of eyes, surrounding the Throne and continually praising Him.

Now, surely, if we met with such images in a human composition, in any one of those beautiful allegories which this age has produced, we should find very little difficulty in understanding what the author meant by them. The Divine Author has represented, in this divinely composed Allegory, the Great Creator sitting upon His Throne; how natural it seems that He should then invent symbols to represent His wonderful works. "All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee."[1] There cannot be a doubt that the glassy sea and the four living creatures represent all that is most excellent in the Creation of the Almighty. The Psalmist sums up, as it were, all the works of God in this lower world, in the following words: "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea; and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."[2] Man, the lord of all living things, he had mentioned just before. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"[3] And in accordance with this summary of the created beings belonging to this world, we have in the Allegory—"Before the throne a glassy sea like crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind; and the first living creature like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature having a face like a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle."[4] The symbolical

[1] Psalm cxlv. 10.
[2] Psalm viii. 7.
[3] Psalm viii. 4.
[4] Rev. iv. 6, 7.

"lion" stands here for "the beasts of the field" of the Psalmist; the "calf" for his "all sheep and oxen;" the "man's face" for that first of earthly creatures whom God hath made "to have dominion over the works of His hand;" the "flying eagle" for "the fowls of the air;" and the clear and glassy ocean for "the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." According to the old Jewish saying, "There are four which take the first place in this world: man among the creatures, the eagle among birds, the ox among cattle, and the lion among wild beasts."[1]

Again, these living creatures are described as appearing "full of eyes," an addition to the symbols which can scarcely be misunderstood by those who remember the words of the Psalmist: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season."[2]

The four-and-twenty Elders, sitting upon thrones round the Throne of God, are certainly to be regarded as the representatives of the whole Church; the symbols of the twelve tribes and the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, "sitting upon twelve thrones, and judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[3]

[1] Hengstenberg, *in loc.* [2] Psalm cxlv. 15. [3] St. Matt. xix. 28. "Ecclesiam . . . de patriarchis et Apostolis generatam, in viginti-quatuor sedilibus cernit."—Bede xii. 356.

Irenæus takes great pains to prove that the prophets did not consider the glorious symbols of the Deity which appeared to them in their ecstatic visions really Divine persons, but only the representatives of God in a figure. Although he says that "secundum hanc rationem," namely, the visions suggested by the Spirit, "invisibilem videbant Deum," he shows how careful Ezekiel was to distinguish the glorious appearance of God, which he saw upon the Cherubic Throne, from God Himself; "ne quis putaret forte eum in his proprie vidisse Deum, intulit: Hæc visio similitudinis gloriæ Domini." He says that what Moses, Elijah, and Ezekiel saw "erant similitudines claritatis Domini et prophetiæ futurorum." He says also of the

Such then are the *Dramatis Personæ*, as it were, in the opening scene or preface of this sublime Allegory : the Everlasting Father sitting upon the Throne of His glory, bright with the radiance of that bow which He appointed to be the emblem of Eternal Mercy, and with the Seven Lamps of fire burning before His Throne ; the four living creatures and four-and-twenty Elders, the representatives of all creation and of those who are redeemed out of the earth : and, lastly, He who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the Lamb which had been slain, having Seven Horns, the emblems of universal power, and Seven Eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth, the Sevenfold Spirit which He poureth out upon all flesh.

We must next consider what are the significant actions of this vision ; a vision which introduces those of the Seven Seals, the first directly prophetical visions of the Book, which will each be described, as they passed before the Seer's eyes, in the following chapters.

In the fourth chapter, the earlier part of the vision, the Almighty is exhibited as receiving praise from all creatures, and from the Church, for the act of creation : "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."[1]

Word, "Non in una figura nec in uno charactere videbatur videntibus eum." He speaks of His symbolical appearance to St. John amidst the seven golden candlesticks. Then he continues thus : "Et post hæc in secunda visione eundem Dominum videns : Vidi, inquit, agnum stantem quasi occisum. . . . Et rursum de eodem ipso agno ait : Et ecce equus albus, et qui sedebat super eum," &c. And then he concludes : "Sic semper verbum Dei velut lineamenta rerum futurarum habet, et velut species dispositionum Patris hominibus ostendebat, docens nos quæ sunt Dei."—Lib. iv. c 20.

[1] Rev. iv. 11.

Then in the fifth chapter the Apostle goes on to describe how he saw in the right hand of the Almighty Creator a Sealed Book; how no one was able to open or look into this Book until a Lamb came forward and took it out of the hand of God, and prepared to open it. "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." [1] Then the whole of this prefatory vision is brought to a close by the recital of the triumphant praises of saints and angels because the Lamb was found worthy to open the Seals of the Book. "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth . . . Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." [2]

Such, then, are the significant actions of the prefatory vision, and they seem to admit of one meaning only. We are taught to expect seven predictions of great importance

[1] Rev. v. 7.

"Cujus hoc loco per sedentem in throno, nisi Patris Persona ostenditur? Quid autem per dexteram sedentis, nisi ejusdem Patris Filius, per quem facta sunt omnia? . . . Idem est dextera sedentis in throno, qui et agnus tanquam occisus in medio throni: quia Dei filius per quem creatus est mundus, et hominis filius per quem redemptus est mundus, non duo, sed unus est Christus. Dextera igitur propter redemptionem. Quamobrem cum librum de dextera sedentis in throno agnus tanquam occisus accipit, a se ipso utique, qui est dextera sedentis in throno, accipit, id est, filius hominis a sua divinitate." *Ambrosius in Apoc.* lib. 3.

[2] Rev. v. 9–14.

to the Church, under the intelligible symbol of a Sealed Book, whose Seven Seals are opened successively, and the contents of the volume thereby disclosed in order to the Apostle. That scroll of prophecy, which Daniel was commanded to roll up and seal, is here unsealed and opened by Christ, and the future is revealed to the Church, still indeed under allegorical figures, but by symbols more intelligible than those of the Hebrew prophet.[1] Thus we are prepared to examine the symbols revealed at the breaking of each Seal; and we expect to find that they prefigure events of great importance to the Church, for we have seen in the prefatory vision that the whole creation, men, saints, and angels, rejoiced because the Lamb "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."[2]

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer."[3]

By the prefatory vision of this series, described in the fourth and fifth chapters, we are led to expect upon the unsealing of the book, there mentioned, the disclosure of things of great importance to the Church. No hint, however, is there given of the nature of the events themselves, a knowledge of which must be derived from an examination of the allegorical figures and actions described in these visions. The symbolical act of unsealing a book manifestly implies the revelation or exhibition of those things contained in it. Now, therefore, that the first seal has been opened, it becomes us to consider with the greatest

[1] "Intus igitur liber scriptus ostenditur allegoria, foris autem historia."—*Ambr. in Apoc.* lib. 3.

[2] Rev. v. 5.

[3] Rev. vi. 1, 2.

attention the allegorical figures which St. John beholds written upon the unrolled portion of the volume, and described by him for our instruction. What then does he see?

He beholds a White Horse, whose Rider holds a bow in his hand, receives a Conqueror's wreath or crown, and goes forth to victory.

In the course of the sacred allegory three other equestrian figures will be introduced. Then, after a great many other symbols of a totally different character, a Rider on a White Horse will be again introduced, occupied in finishing that victorious career which He is said to commence in the scene we are considering. In the vision of the First Seal a Rider on a White Horse goes forth "conquering and in order to conquer."[1] And in the closing scene of the Allegory, in the 19th chapter, a Rider on a White Horse, attended by many others, slays the remnant of His enemies with a sword which proceedeth out of His mouth.[2] We can scarcely question the identity of these two prominent symbols. The Rider of the White Horse, introduced in the first scene of the Sacred Drama, seen for a few moments and then sent forth to victory, must be intended to represent the Same Person as the Equestrian Figure introduced again in the closing scene, and there seen with many followers destroying the remnant of His enemies.

Now, the prophecy explains the latter of these horsemen, and informs us that He is, in the Allegory, the Symbol of Christ.

He is thus described by St. John: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True . . . and his name is called the WORD OF GOD."[3] Here then is an end of all further conjectures. We are bound in all fairness to

[1] Rev. vi. 2. [2] Rev. xix. 21. [3] Rev. xix. 11, 13.

adopt the interpretation which the prophecy itself gives of its own symbols. The slight differences observable in these two Equestrian Figures, introduced in widely different scenes and under widely different circumstances, are not only insufficient to justify their application to different Persons, but are exactly suited to the different occasions of their introduction. When we see this Horseman in the vision of the First Seal he holds a bow and receives a conqueror's wreath. For here he represents Christ just after His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension to that Heavenly Throne where He sitteth until His enemies are made His footstool. He here represents Christ when He had "visited his flock, the house of Judah, and had made them his goodly horse in the battle:"[1] "When He had bent Judah . . . and filled the bow with Ephraim."[2] He here represents Christ crowned with the wreath of victory, because He had just triumphed over Satan and received from The Father all power in heaven and in earth. He here represents Christ "going forth" in His own person and that of His Apostles and Martyrs, "conquering and in order to conquer."

He represents Christ under widely different circumstances, when we behold Him again, in the vision of the 19th chapter, the closing scene of the Drama. There He appears in all the terrors of wrath and judgment, slaying the remnant of His enemies with the sword that proceedeth out of His mouth.[3]

We must, then, conclude that the Rider on the White Horse is, so to speak, the Hero of the Drama, and we must accept this statement of the prophet, that His Name is called the Word of God, as an established premise from which to argue, and as a clue purposely given to

[1] Zech. x. 3. [2] Zech. ix. 13. [3] Rev. xix. 21.

lead us to a right understanding of all the other symbols employed.[1]

Although the chapters, from the beginning of the 6th to the end of the 19th, contain very many separate visions, just as a dramatic composition is divided into very many and very various acts and scenes, they nevertheless manifestly describe one long dramatic allegory, the subject of which is made known by the first and last scenes : namely, the warfare and victory of that Glorious Equestrian Figure, announced and begun in the first scene and completed in the last. "He went forth conquering and in order to conquer" in the first vision ; and, in the last, "the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth : and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."[2]

With this clue we may unfold the meaning of all the intermediate acts and scenes of this Sublime Drama, which we may call the Allegory of the Rider on the White Horse.[3] These consist of separate visions which passed in succession before the eye or before the imagination of the Seer. And it will be seen that many of them are, as it were, parenthetical. They are put in to clear up the obscurities or to supply the omissions of their predecessors. We shall therefore find in the course of our Drama that,

[1] "Οσα εἶπον καὶ ἐποίησαν οἱ προφῆται . . . παραβολαῖς καὶ τύποις ἀπεκάλυψαν, ὡς μὴ ῥᾳδίως τὰ πλεῖστα ὑπὸ πάντων νοηθῆναι, κρύπτοντες τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀλήθειαν, ὡς καὶ πονέσαι τοὺς ξητοῦντας εὑρεῖν καὶ μαθεῖν." —*Justini Dial. cum Tryph.* c. 89. But "Parabolæ," says Irenæus, "his, quæ manifeste dicta sunt, consonabunt, et manifeste dicta absolvent parabolas."—Lib. ii. c. 28.

[2] Rev. xix. 21.

[3] Justin explains the dramatic structure of many prophecies, and then adds : "quale est quod etiam apud vestros scriptores cernere licet, apud quos unus quidem scribit omnia, colloquentes autem personas inducit."—*Justini Apol.* i. c. 36.

from time to time, we are carried back again to the very beginning, or at least to some earlier period of history, after having been brought almost to its close. Yet there is nothing in this inconsistent with the common practice of historians or dramatic writers, who often take us back again to earlier times to make us better acquainted with the origin of their characters, or to treat with greater clearness the different subjects of their narration.[1]

Let this point, then, be kept steadily in view, that the subject of the Allegory we are studying is the Warfare and final Victory of the Rider on the White Horse, or, in plainer language, the Warfare of Christ with Satan, the struggles of Christianity with the world.

Now we know that Christ came into the world visibly only once; and we believe that He will come once again visibly at the end of this dispensation, to destroy His enemies and to reward His saints. Thus far then the Allegory corresponds with the facts known to us from other sources. The Rider on the White Horse appears likewise in the first and last scenes only of this Drama.

But we know, also, that before Christ ascended into heaven He delegated His authority to His disciples and promised to be always spiritually present with them. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."[2] "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."[3] "Lo, I am with you alway,

[1] "Recapitulatio pro locis intelligenda est: aliquando enim ab origine passionis, aliquando a medio tempore, aliquando de sola ipsa novissima pressura, aut non multo ante dicturus recapitulat."—Bede xii. 338.

"Totum enim tempus Ecclesiæ variis in hoc libro figuris repetit."—*Id.* p. 355.

"Cum præcurrerit usque ad novissimum, rursum tempora superiora repetit."—Victorinus.

[2] St. John xx. 21. [3] St. Matt. x. 40.

even unto the end of the world."[1] We shall therefore expect to find those human agents, by whom the Warfare of Christ is carried on in the world during His own bodily absence, represented by fitting symbols in the course of this Allegory. When they are doing their work thoroughly in accordance with His Will, we shall naturally expect to find them represented in the Allegory as very like Him. And when they are perfect saints, we shall not feel surprised if they appear His very counterparts. We have an instance of this in the 19th chapter. Not only does Christ there ride forth to destroy His enemies on a White Horse, but His saints are seen following Him in a similar manner. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."[2]

Again, we know as a matter of fact that many of those who held Christ's delegated authority, the regularly ordained successors of His Apostles, very soon lost their resemblance to their Divine Master, and became in spirit and in conduct very unlike Him. How naturally, then, we expect to find such persons represented in the Allegory as like the Symbol of Christ in some points, but very unlike Him in others.

Of this also there are three striking examples in the visions of the Second, Third, and Fourth Seals. In each of these scenes an equestrian figure appears, in this respect resembling the symbol of Christ and His perfect saints. But the horses of these riders, instead of being white, are red, black, and pale. And in their actions they depart still further from Him whose image they have defaced, being engaged: the first, in taking peace from the earth; the second, in getting money; and the third, in slaying the saints of God.

Grave objections might be made to this application of the three symbols, if it were not notoriously and historically true that the ordained successors of the Apostles did, when

[1] St. Matt. xxviii. 20. [2] Rev. xix. 14.

they had obtained the Sword of Civil Power, grossly misuse it, to the scandal of the Christian religion, by persecuting those who differed from them in opinion; that they also soon began to be covetous and fond of money; and that at last they tormented and killed those who dared to remind them of the pure doctrines of the Gospel. If, indeed, these scandalous crimes of the Church were not notorious, who would dare to apply these symbols to her ministers? But as the case stands the justice of the application must be admitted.

We shall also, of course, expect to find many symbols representing the more open enemies of Christ. These are the Devil and the human agents employed by him to oppose or corrupt the Gospel. We know as an historical fact that, at first, the powers of the world were openly opposed to Christianity, and that, after a time, they were converted and made a nominal profession of a belief in its doctrines. But we know also the hollowness of this profession in most cases, and the corruptions both in doctrine and practice to which it gradually led.

The Devil and his agents are represented in this Allegory by fitting symbols: the former by that of a Great Red Serpent, the latter by that of a Scarlet-coloured Beast with Seven Heads and Ten Horns. And those ecclesiastical powers who have misused Christ's delegated authority, to the corruption of His religion, can always be recognised by some external mark of resemblance to a Symbol of Christ combined with other tokens of opposition to Him. Thus, besides the Three Riders on a Red, Black, and Pale Horse, we may instance the Beast with Lamb's Horns but with the speech of a serpent, as an example of an ecclesiastical power having the authority of the Lamb but exercising the deceitfulness of Satan.

But there remains another distinct class of symbols to

be alluded to, before we begin to examine the whole Allegory in detail. These are described in the visions of the Trumpets and Vials. It will be sufficient to say here that they announce the victories and pour forth the judgments of Christ upon His enemies, both open and concealed, both ecclesiastical and temporal.

We must therefore conclude that the vision of the First Seal represents, under the emblem of a Man riding on a White Horse, holding a bow, receiving a crown, and going forth to victory, the commencement of the Warfare of Christ. This warfare was begun by Christ in Person, and was continued in the person of His Apostles and their earlier successors, the Bishops and Martyrs of the primitive Church. The Glory, and Brightness, and Purity of Christ and His Saints are intimated by the white colour of the horse.[1] For this colour is explained to bear this meaning in the prophecy itself. The Saints are said to have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."[2] Daniel also speaks of it as the result of trial and persecution: "Some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white."[3] To walk with Christ in white is spoken of as the reward of faithfulness: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."[4] And white linen or raiment is expressly said to represent the righteousness of the Saints. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the Saints."[5]

[1] "In primo sigillo, decus Ecclesiæ primitivæ. Ecclesiæ, quæ super nivem gratia dealbata est, Dominus præsidet, et spiritualis doctrinæ contra impios arma ferens, victor in suis coronam percipit."—Bede, *in loc.*

[2] Rev. vii. 14.

[3] Dan. xi. 35.

[4] Rev. iii. 4.

[5] Rev. xix. 8.

The bow also in the hand of the Rider is the instrument of victory.[1] It is used in Scripture for the whole furniture of war. "I will not trust in my bow,"[2] says David. "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back."[3] "He gave them as dust to his sword and as stubble to his bow."[4] And a bow and arrows are expressly ascribed to the Messiah in the 45th Psalm: "In thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." Here we have the Messiah, as in the vision of the First Seal, represented as one riding forth to victory, and His victory is ascribed to His sharp arrows. Now we know that the instruments by which Christ subdues the world to His religion are the words of His faithful ministers; the faithful, therefore, amongst the Israelites are spoken of by Zechariah, in a passage before quoted, as a bow in the Messiah's hand: "I will render double unto thee; when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning."[5]

The Crown which is given to the Rider is not a Regal Crown, but a wreath of victory. For Christ is here represented not only as going forth "in order to conquer," but also as "conquering." He does not wear the many Regal Diadems until His Second appearance, when all

[1] "Dominus misit Spiritum Sanctum, cujus verba prædicatores tanquam sagittis ad cor humanum pertingentes emiserunt, ut evincerent incredulitatem. Corona autem super caput prædicatoribus est promissa per Spiritum Sanctum."—Victorinus, *in loc.* [2] Psalm xliv. 6.
[3] 2 Sam. i. 22. [4] Isa. xli. 2. [5] Zech. ix. 12–14.

enemies have been subdued, and the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ; but He wears the Victor's Wreath because He has already conquered Satan in His Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven; and also in the person of His Apostles and Martyrs, to whom, therefore, He elsewhere promises a similar reward: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."[1]

In conclusion, then, we may observe that this vision of the First Seal refers historically to the primitive and most pure ages of Christianity, when Christ conquered in those of His ministers who resembled Him, not only in their delegated authority, but also in the power of their preaching, consequent upon the holiness and self-devotion of their lives. It is quite unnecessary, as it is impossible, to say to what number of years this vision was intended to apply. We do not know how long we may be justified in identifying with Christ, as they are identified with Him in the 19th chapter, those sacred ministers and messengers to whom He delegated that authority and communicated that mission which he had Himself received from the Father. But as long as the Apostles, Bishops, Clergy, and Martyrs resembled Christ in holiness and self-devotion, so long in a subordinate sense we may apply the symbol of this vision to them; so long may we consider that Christ was riding on to victory in their persons; so long the bow

[1] Rev. ii. 10.

Archbishop Trench draws a clear distinction between *στέφανος* and *διάδημα*, the wreath of victory and the regal or imperial crown. He illustrates this distinction from the very passages of the Apocalypse under consideration; and he further shows that our Lord's crown of thorns is called *στέφανος*, as consisting of materials which must have been woven. He quotes this as "the only occasion on which *στέφανος* might seem to be used of a kingly crown."—*Synonyms of the N. T.* pp. 88–92.

of power which He wielded was in their right hands also ; and the crown of life was bestowed upon them as the reward of faithful service, of attending and promoting the victorious career of Him Who rode upon the White Horse.

A more exact historical application than this, even if possible, would be of little use. The practical teaching of the vision is far more important. If the Gospel is to conquer, it must be preached by Christ-like ministers. No worldly power, no riches, no learning, no labour, no eloquence will compensate for the absence of this one quality, likeness to Christ. Those who, in the 19th chapter, follow Him to victory are like Him in all things, Riding upon White Horses, and "clothed in fine linen, white and clean."[1] And if His ministers, in any age, would convert sinners and bring unbelievers to a knowledge of the Living God, they must be in the world as He was in the world, gentle, holy, and self-denying, setting forth Christ crucified, not only with their lips but in their lives. Otherwise, like the Riders on the Red, Black, and Pale Horses, they may have zeal, money, and dominion, but in the Last Day there will be fewer souls to bear witness to the power of their preaching ; they will miss the reward of those who turn many to righteousness, and may even fall into the condemnation of Balaam, and of the betrayer of our Lord.

May then the Image of this Glorious Warrior be ever present to our minds in the thickest of the battle ! He is indeed our Great Captain, the Leader of our armies, the Source of our strength, and the Rewarder of our victories over self, the world, and the Devil. His eye is ever upon us, and His voice is heard in the secret warnings of conscience. But, alas ! we have made peace with the enemy ; an unholy peace, which Christ has never sanctioned. We let the world take its course, and purchase its

[1] Rev. xix. 14.

friendship by the sacrifice of our honour and the breach of our military oath. Never until we again break through that false alliance, and wage open and internecine war with the sins, and follies, and idols of a wicked and hypocritical world, shall we find that He is Riding amongst us upon the White Horse, giving our enemies as stubble to His bow, and leading forth our armies "conquering and in order to conquer."

CHAPTER V

THE RIDERS ON THE RED, BLACK, AND PALE HORSES

"And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red, and it was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." [1]

The Second Seal being broken, the Sacred Volume is further unrolled, so that St. John is able to see what is depicted upon it. We may, therefore, regard this as the second scene, so to speak, of the Allegorical Drama of the Rider on the White Horse. Another equestrian figure comes, as it were, upon the stage, in some respects closely resembling, and in others widely differing from the Rider upon the White Horse. The present figure resembles his predecessor in some points. He is an equestrian figure. He rides forth on a Red Horse, much power is given him over the earth, and a Great Sword is put into his hand. So far, then, as he is a powerful horseman, he resembles the preceding rider.

In what respects does he differ from Him?

1. The colour of his horse is not the same. He rides upon a red horse instead of a white one.

[1] Rev. vi. 3, 4.

2. He is not represented as holding a bow in his hand, but a great sword is given him.

3. No crown is presented to him.

4. He is not said to be conquering, but is represented as taking peace from the earth, and causing mutual bloodshed amongst men.

We have already seen that the Rider on the White Horse represents Christ going forth, in His own person and in that of His Apostles and Martyrs, to subdue the world to His religion. We also know that, before He left the earth, He delegated His authority to His Apostles. The Apostles transmitted this authority to their successors; and ever since that time there has been a Visible Church in the world, ruled over by a regularly ordained Episcopate and Presbytery. As the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat and taught with his authority, so the lawfully-ordained Bishops and Clergy sit, as it were, in Christ's seat and teach with Christ's authority. But it is a deplorable truth that, as the Scribes and Pharisees abused the authority they had received from Moses, so the successors of the Apostles have too often abused the authority they have received from Christ.[1] And if a Church historian were required to state what first led to the abuse of ministerial authority, he would be obliged to say, unchastened and cruel zeal and the possession of temporal power.

There is every reason to believe, therefore, that the Rider in this Second Seal is the symbol of the rulers of the Church possessed of the Sword of Civil Power.

Let us consider the various details of this vision, and compare with other passages of Scripture the interpretation suggested.

First, then, we may identify this Rider upon a Red

[1] "Nos, vir optime, eidem cum Scribis et Pharisæis judicio obnoxii sumus."—*Isidori Pelus. Epist.* lib. i. 97.

Horse with that ministry which had received, through Apostolical ordination, the authority of Christ; we may consider him to symbolise, in the Allegory, the visible militant Church represented by its ruling body; because such an interpretation is consistent with that of the First Seal. If Christ is represented in the Allegory by an Equestrian Figure, it is consistent and natural that His ministers and messengers should be exhibited under a like symbol. This also was one of the most ancient, because one of the most obvious, interpretations.[1]

Moreover, in the visions of Zechariah, similar figures were exhibited to the eyes of the prophet, and he was told by the Angel that they represented the messengers of the Lord. "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse . . . . and behind him were red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these?"[2] The answer to this question is given in the following words: "These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." This symbol, therefore, was not one with which St. John was unacquainted. It had been described before by one of his brethren, the prophets; and explained by him to be an emblem of a messenger of the Lord.

But what shall we say of the Colour of the Horse, the Sword in the hand of the Rider, and the employment attributed to him?

As whiteness in this prophecy is identified with every-

[1] "Hanc secundam ab Apostolis successionem interpretari possumus."—Andreas Cæsariensis, *in loc.* Both this writer and Aretas, who followed him, perceived that if the first rider signifies the Christian ministry, the three following riders must be understood of the same. They lived too early to see the application of the visions to a gradually deteriorating ministry, but they saw that the symbols point to that ministry.

[2] Zech. i. 8–10; conf. vi. 1–8.

thing which is pure, holy, and glorious, and is manifestly the colour attributed to the Emblems of Christ and His Saints; so Redness is the proper colour of the Serpent and of the Beast to whom he gives his power. In the vision of the 12th chapter the Devil is introduced under the image of a Great Red Serpent; and the Beast to whom, in the 13th chapter, he gives "his power and seat, and great authority," is called, in the 17th chapter, a scarlet-coloured Beast. The Harlot also, who sits upon this Beast, is said to be arrayed in scarlet, a colour which Isaiah certainly identifies with evil, when he says, in the words of God, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[1]

We must therefore understand the Red Colour of the Horse in this vision in a bad sense, as indicating a departure from Christ-like purity in the Church invested with the authority of Christ.

Again, the "great sword" in the hand of the Rider, and the use he makes of it, intimate most clearly the nature of the evil symbolised by the Redness of the Horse.

The whole Church and its rulers very soon forgot the Apostolic injunction, "foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."[2] They did not even remember the solemn warning of Christ, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."[3] Notwithstanding these and many similar evangelical precepts, it is well known that for ages the whole Church was harassed by most bitter controversial strife; and that those Christians, who once so loved one another as to excite the wonder of their heathen persecutors, made

[1] Isaiah i. 18. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 23–25. [3] St. Matt. xxvi. 52.

use of the literal sword for the destruction of their brethren.[1]

The peculiar form of evil, therefore, which is intimated by the red colour of the horse, is that of over-zealous and unchristian controversy, leading to fierce strife and religious wars.[2] It is enough to say that the sword is the common emblem of strife, and that it is so used in many passages of Scripture; especially in the prophetic warning of Our Lord, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."[3] It is enough to say that powerful and cutting words, whether good or evil, are frequently called a sword; as, in this prophecy, a sharp two-edged sword proceedeth out of the Mouth of Christ;[4] as Isaiah says, "he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;"[5] and as David uses the figure in a bad sense, "his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords:"[6] "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."[7] It is enough, for the interpretation of this vision, to show that the sword has these figurative significations in Scripture. But the epithet Great must not be overlooked; "a great sword was given him." There is something significant in this: the Great Sword must point to the Great Imperial Sword, which was drawn so often in the religious wars of the Church. The sword of the Cæsars was, as it were, placed in the hand of Christ's Church, when the

[1] "The theory of persecution was established by Theodosius; but the practice of it, in its fullest extent, was reserved for his rival and colleague, Maximus, the first among the Christian princes who shed the blood of his Christian subjects, on account of their religious opinions." A.D. 385. Gibbon, c. 27.

Gibbon also describes a religious "war of two hundred and fifty years," c. 47.

[2] Speaking of the first two riders, an ancient commentator says, "Ille concordiæ, hic vero autor est discordiæ."—Ambrosius, *in loc.*

[3] St. Matt. x. 34. [4] Rev. i. 16; ii. 12; xix. 15.

[5] Isaiah xlix. 2. [6] Psalm lv. 21. [7] Psalm lvii. 4.

Roman Empire was converted, and Christianity became the state religion.[1] The sword, indeed, is not only the emblem of strife; it is also a symbol of that which gave the Church so much power for strife, the authority of the civil magistrate. It is so used by St. Paul, who, in speaking of a king or ruler, says, "if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain."[2]

No wonder, then, that the Rider on the Red Horse receives no crown of victory, and is not said, like his predecessor, to go forth "conquering and in order to conquer." This vision reveals to us the first ecclesiastical sin which checked the victorious progress of the Gospel. And here again, as in the former vision, we see the great practical use of the Apocalypse. In the vision of the White Horse we see the secret of the Church's victories. When she is arrayed in that white raiment which is the righteousness of Saints, when she exhibits to the world an example of the purity, gentleness, and self-devotion of Christ and His Apostles, though she may be persecuted, though she may be opposed, still she goes on "conquering and to conquer."

[1] "Le premier état dans lequel l'Eglise se montre au V^e^ siècle, c'est l'état d'Eglise impériale, d'Eglise de l'Empire Romain."—Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation*, p. 178. The distinction between the temporal and spiritual power is traced to its true source by this enlightened author, and the advantages and disadvantages of their union are clearly pointed out. He shows how the Church attempted to possess herself of the temporal power; and how, failing in this attempt, she has always supported absolute rulers in order to share their power. Pp. 65-68.

[2] Rom. xiii. 4.

"Per duos gladios intelligebantur duæ potestates: viz., temporalis et spiritualis. Sed penes quos voluit esse istos duos gladios? Certum est quod penes Petrum et alios Apostolos. Petro autem successit dominus Papa . . . . vult esse (gladium temporalem) in manu Judicis laicalis: secundum nutum vero et imperium, penes sacerdotem."—*Bertrandus pro Eccl.* lib. Act. 1.

But let her once take into her hands the sword of strife, and the Great Sword of the Civil Power, and her influence will be greatly diminished. She may still govern the bodies of men, she may even convert whole nations to the external profession of her religion, but she will have far less power over their affections. There will still be, indeed, through the mercy of God, many individuals in her company who will mourn over her contentions, and by the purity of their lives and the power of their preaching will, in every age, turn many to righteousness. But, as a body, a Church deformed by religious wars is a Church powerless for spiritual purposes. She is like a house divided against itself, which, so far from being able to support anything else, cannot but fall itself, sooner or later, into ruin and infamy.

The Vision of the Red Horse, then, points chiefly to the state of the Church during the ages next to those of the Apostles and primitive Christians. It discloses the fiery zeal of those times, and the bitter strifes, controversies, and religious wars which that zeal, unsoftened by love, produced. But, like all other heaven-sent visions, it contains also a living principle, capable of application to every age at all resembling its own.

Now, if there ever was an age which needed the admonition of this prophecy, it is that one in which Providence has cast our lot. Injudicious and intemperate zeal, and its natural fruit, foolish and uncharitable controversy, are the odious and unchristian characteristics of the present time. Why do they prevail so extensively? Because men will not follow the advice of the inspired Apostle, "foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife." Because both clergy and people forget that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves."[1] Too often, like the sons of thunder, they remember not what spirit they are of, but, entertaining still the carnal spirit of dominion, desire to make themselves "lords over God's heritage," rather than "examples to the flock."[2]

But this is only the dark side of the picture. Thanks be to God, we have amongst us many really earnest, gentle, soul-loving, and Christ-like ministers. These, indeed, are probably far more numerous than we imagine; for, like their Blessed Master, such gentle pastors of the flock neither "cry, nor lift up, nor cause their voices to be heard in the street."[3] Yet when we look around us, when we consider the unconverted heathen abroad, and the scarcely more converted masses of our own people at home, we must exclaim in the words of our Lord, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."[4]

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."[5]

Another Seal is broken, and St. John beholds a Third Horseman riding upon a Black Horse, with a pair of

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 23–25.

[2] "Si autem paterna cura vobis commissa est, quid tyrannos sævitia superatis? Quid eos, qui Divino cruore redempti sunt, ipsi in servitutem trahitis?"—*Isidori Pelus. Epist.* lib. ii. 234.

"Ambitio et imperandi cupiditas omnium causa malorum."—*Id.* lib. iv. 55.

[3] Isaiah xlii. 2.

[4] St. Matt. ix. 37, 38.

[5] Rev. vi. 5, 6.

balances in his hand; and a voice explains the use which the rider makes of this instrument; announcing at what price he sells wheat and barley, and with what care he preserves the more costly luxuries of life, the oil and the wine.

Since the agent in this vision is an equestrian figure, he must be regarded as in some way connected with the Great Hero of the Drama, the Rider on the White Horse. And it will, therefore, be consistent to consider him as representing that Church which still claimed and held the delegated authority of Christ.

Black is the exact opposite to white. And therefore, if the white colour of the First Horse was emblematic of the purity of Christ and His primitive Church, the Black colour of the present Horse will denote a departure from holiness of some kind, and taken in connection with the pair of balances in the Rider's hand and his occupation of selling food to men, it points out the vice of covetousness and the love of the good things of this world—a vice not confined indeed to any one age, but characteristic especially of those ages which followed the ages of controversy, and a vice which attained its climax after the consolidation of the great European Hierarchy.[1]

[1] "Passing rapidly from a condition of distress and persecution to the summit of prosperity, the Church degenerated as rapidly from her ancient purity, and forfeited the respect of future ages in the same proportion as she acquired the blind veneration of her own. Covetousness especially, became almost a characteristic vice. . . . And several of the fathers severely reprobate the prevailing avidity of their contemporaries."—Hallam's *Middle Ages*, c. 7.

"Simony, or the corrupt purchase of spiritual benefices, was the second characteristic reproach of the clergy in the 11th century."—*Ibid.*

"C'est le temps des plus grands abus de la simonie, de la disposition tout-à-fait arbitraire des bénéfices ecclésiastiques."—Guizot, *Civ. Eur.* p. 183.

It must be admitted that this interpretation is only too consistent with historical truth, and conveys a great practical warning always needed by the Church. It is consistent also with the rest of the Drama and with the practical teaching of other Scriptures. Let us examine the several parts of the vision, the black colour of the horse, the instrument in the rider's hand, and the occupation attributed to him.

We may conclude that the Black Colour of the Horse denotes a departure from primitive and Christ-like holiness of some kind.[1]

The particular character of the vice is in no way pointed out by the Black Colour; to learn this we must consider the instrument in the hand of the rider.

He no longer holds in his hand the bow of victory, or the sword of strife, but the common instrument of worldly traffic—a strange weapon for the hand of a mounted warrior.[2] Yet a pair of balances is not more unsuited to the hand of a soldier than is the use of such an instrument, the traffic of this world, to the office of the Lord's Minister.

That this instrument is emblematic of the occupation of buying and selling requires no proof. Moreover, the rider is here distinctly said to be engaged in this business. Neither can it be necessary to prove to the Christian reader that money-getting and worldly traffic are occupations least of all suited to the ministerial office, to those who claim the delegated authority of Christ on earth.[3]

Nothing can be stronger than the condemnation of

[1] "Equus niger falsorum caterva est fratrum."—Bede, *in loc.*

[2] "Habens stateram in manu sua."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

All the anclent writers whom I have consulted understand ζυγόν, in its natural sense in this context, to mean a pair of balances, and not, as some few moderns interpret it, a yoke.

[3] "Non Christiani, sed Christempori, id est, Christi lucriones,

covetousness by the Apostles, nothing clearer than their predictions that their successors would be given to this vice. They call it idolatry, and declare that the love of money is the root of all evil. St. Paul clearly predicts the coming evil to his disciples: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock;" [1] and such persons he elsewhere more particularly describes as "men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." [2] To his testimony we may add that of St. Peter, who says of the false teachers who should come after him, "through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." [3]

As, then, the false prophets of old are condemned for using the balances, and occupying themselves with worldly traffic, instead of teaching God's people; and as the Apostles predict the coming of covetous and worldly-minded ministers in the Church of Christ; so we find the same admonition and prediction symbolically set forth in the Sacred Dramatic Allegory of the Apocalypse. The minister of Christ becomes covetous and worldly-minded. He makes merchandise of those whom he ought to cherish and instruct. [4]

quique ex Christi nomine quæstum faciunt."—Ignatius, *Max. Bib. Vet. Pat.* ii. 76.

"Nolite facere domum meam domum negotiationis, ad eos qui columbas vendebant, dixit Dominus, sacerdotes, qui Spiritus Sancti dona vendebant, significans."—*Isidori Pelus. Epist.* lib. i. 146.

"Periculosum siquidem est in laico, sed perniciosum in clerico negotiationibus augere peculium. . . . Negotiatorem clericum sacri canones execrantur."—*Petri Bles. Epist. ad Clericum Negotiatorem.*

[1] Acts xx. 29.

"De lana ovium, et non de salute solliciti."—*Pet. Bles. Serm.* 57.

[2] 1 Tim. vi. 5. [3] 2 Pet. ii. 3.

[4] "Clericorum avaritiæ ascribitur quod quotidie fere capitula sive concilia sua tenent: quærentes non morum correctionem, sed nummorum extorsionem."—*Pet. Bles. Serm.* 57.

It is immaterial, so far as the general signification of the symbols is concerned, whether we understand the wheat, the barley, the oil and the wine, in a literal or figurative sense, to represent the natural or the spiritual food of man. It is sufficient to observe that the rider of this vision is engaged in selling such things; for this fixes the meaning of the balances in his hand. Had there been no mention of buying or selling, it must have remained doubtful whether the ζυγὸν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ was a yoke or a pair of balances; and therefore the mention of the act of selling may be added merely to clear up this doubt. But in so highly figurative an Allegory we can scarcely help, with the gross simony of the Church before our minds, giving a spiritual meaning to these articles of food, justified as we are in so doing by the metaphorical language of other Scriptures.[1] It is obvious that these particular articles of food are mentioned in preference to any others, because they formed, with Oriental nations, the main support of human life. "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines"[2] is a land of plenty in the language of Moses; and Hiram, in his message to Solomon, mentions

[1] "Avaritia hæc simoniaca ipsa est vermis et interficiens, bruchus pessimus, ærugo et tinea cordis, quæ bona omnia æruginat et consumit.

Nobilis Ecclesiæ quondam venerabile nomen
Prostat, et in quæstu pro meretrice sedet.

"Usu et experientia quotidiana cognovimus spiritualium venditores, quanto plures opes accumulant, tanto majori semper egestate confundi."—*Pet. Bles. Epist.* 129.

"Quid enim faciet laicus simplex, nisi quod patrem suum spiritualem viderit facientem? In multis notabilis est avaritia sacerdotum; præsertim dum pro quæstu temporali faciunt se ordinari: dum in spe vilissimæ oblationis Sacramenta conficiunt: de cadaveribus litigant: sepulturam, baptismum vendunt, nihil gratis impendentes: sed in universis suam sequentes avaritiam; sicut dicitur per Malachiam: Quis est in vobis qui claudat ostia mea et ponat incensum super altare meum gratuito?"—Ejusdem *Sermo* 57.

[2] Deut. viii. 8.

together "the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine,"[1] as the support necessary for his labourers engaged in felling the cedars of Lebanon.

By an easy metaphor, then, we may transfer these articles of food to the food of the immortal soul. This bread of life, this living water, this oil of the Spirit, this wine that maketh glad the inmost soul of man, these supports of the spiritual life were offered by Our Saviour and His Apostles to all men alike, "without money and without price." But it is too well known at how high a price, and in what scanty measure, they were sold by His ministers in the dark ages to the perishing souls of professing Christians; so that in those days were fulfilled the words of the ancient prophet, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."[2]

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."[3]

How fearful a picture is presented to the eyes of the Apostle! A Mounted Warrior again passes before him. But the Horse is of a most loathsome hue, the colour of leprosy; and the Rider is emphatically named Death. Moreover, to add to the terrific nature of the scene, an attendant is given him, whose name is Hell. St. John sees that these persons are permitted to kill men with sword,

[1] 2 Chron. ii. 15. [2] Amos viii. 11.

"Temporalibus stipendiis quorundam vitam mercari quærit . . . inedia spiritalis cibi necatos in augmentum sui corporis sumens."—*Ambrosius in Equum Nigrum.*

[3] Rev. vi. 7, 8.

famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. He is further given to understand that their dominion extends over no less than a quarter of the globe.

Now, it seems strange that the Church of Christ should in any age be represented by symbols like these. Objects most offensive to the sight and appalling to the imagination are here brought together. A Horse, whose flesh is discoloured by leprosy, is ridden by Death, and followed by Hell. The Rider and his companion are busy with the work of death, in every most terrific form ; and a fourth part of the world is given over to their power. These are indeed hateful images. Yet let us consider, what can be more hateful than the profession of religion accompanied by ignorance, superstition, and ingenious cruelty? We search in vain throughout the pages of history for a more hateful character than that of the hardened Pharisee, who, though he sat in Moses' seat, brought about by his jealousy and malice the cruel and ignominious death of the Prophet like unto Moses, yea, the Lord of Moses Himself. Jesus, who ate with publicans, received sinners, and pardoned the adulteress, condemned as the very children of the Devil those Pharisees who in His day were the leading religious sect, the authorised teachers of the law, and the most punctilious observers of its ceremonial precepts. And it is well known that, as there is nothing more blinding than hypocrisy, so there is nothing more hardening, more cruel, and more diabolical than mistaken zeal stimulated by the fears of the ministers of a dominant superstition. Now the part which the Pharisees acted towards our Saviour was acted over again and again, between the 10th and 15th centuries, in Christian Europe. The words of Jesus were fulfilled to the letter : "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."[1] The Rulers of

[1] St. John xvi. 2.

Christendom, Ecclesiastical and Civil, used every effort to stem the torrent of Reformation. Pious men began to find out that all was not right, and that the established doctrines and practices were not such as Christ and His Apostles would sanction. They raised their voices against the corruption of the times. But their testimony brought them in most cases to the rack or to the stake.[1]

We need not fear, then, to apply the hateful figure in this vision to those Ministers of Christ who with blind zeal tried to quench the dawning light of Reformation in the blood of the Inquisition. We have not come suddenly to this consummation of evil; we have been brought to it step by step. It is a painfully interesting study to trace the downward course of the Minister of Christ. First we find him, in the earlier centuries, riding in White behind his Blessed Master, "conquering and to conquer;" trampling beneath his horse-hoofs the idols of Pagan Rome, or nourishing with a martyr's blood the vine-roots of the infant Church. Next we behold him, in the ages following the era of Constantine, grasping with impetuous zeal the Sword of Civil Power, and plunging it into the bosom of those who bear like himself the name of Christian. It is humiliating, after this, to see him occupied in studying his own sordid interest; given over to the lust of filthy lucre, buying and selling the food of immortal souls.

The Apostle tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil; and never, perhaps, did greater evil spring from any root than the malice and cruelty which sprang from the root of the covetousness of the clergy in the ages before

[1] "The Catholic princes connected their own interest with that of the clergy, and enforced by fire and the sword the terrors of spiritual censures. In the Netherlands alone, more than one hundred thousand of the subjects of Charles the Fifth are said to have suffered by the hand of the executioner."—Gibbon, c. 16.

and during the Reformation. It is not easy to conceive more diabolical wickedness than was practised in those ages, when men were tortured and burnt for attempting the reformation of the Church; and sometimes, it must be admitted, for resisting the work of over-zealous reformers.

We see, then, in the Vision of the Fourth Seal a symbol of the persecuting Church before and during the Reformation.

The Rider still bears the outward form of Christ's Minister, but his works are the works of Christ's enemy.[1] He is the Minister of a Church which, like Sardis, is said to be alive, but is really dead, though containing within it a few names which have not defiled themselves.

And here the author would entreat the candid reader to observe that he does not dare to apply the visions of any portion of the Apocalypse to the whole Church of any age, or to the whole Roman Catholic Church as such. Many of the prophecies of this Book relate to the wicked rulers and supporters of the Roman Catholic system; but they are so far from being applicable to the pious and earnest members of that communion, that they are doubtless written expressly for their consolation and support, when they mourn, as they must do, over the many corruptions which have been introduced into Christendom. We, who have been excluded from their communion, must remember that there is as much piety amongst Roman Catholics as amongst ourselves; and that in many works of charity, and in many other evidences of a living faith, they may often surpass us. But this is no reason why either they or we should be blind to the crimes of which the Church has been guilty, or to the cruelty and superstition

[1] "Hæretici qui se Catholicos palliant, morte inhabitatrice digni, perditorum post se rapiunt exercitum."—Bede, *in loc.*

which have been practised by their rulers.[1] It is against a persecuting Hierarchy, whether Papal or Reformed, and not against any really pious Christians, that the language of the prophet is directed; and the Rider in the present vision represents the Minister of religion, as Our Saviour before represented him, in the character of a wolf devouring the flock. He is emphatically called Death, and is followed by Hell, doubtless because he is occupied in destroying instead of saving men; striving, by the terrors of the rack and the flames, to frighten them into an acceptance of erroneous doctrines, and so endeavouring to kill both body and soul together. He slays them with the Sword of Civil Power, giving them over, according to the language of that day, to the Secular Arm; with that famine of the Word of God of which Amos speaks;[2] with the pestilence of corrupt doctrine; and with those Wild Beasts of the earth of whom the prophet afterwards speaks more fully, the Kings and Rulers of Christendom. His power also extends over the whole of Europe, over the fourth part of the earth.

Thus, then, the first four scenes of the Apocalyptic Drama, as they passed before the eyes of the Apostle, have been examined. Can more warning or instruction be drawn from any other portion of Scripture? What can stimulate the Church to more earnest and self-denying exertion, or warn her more effectually of the awful nature of her responsibilities, than an attentive consideration of these striking visions?

[1] "Plain as these things are," says Dr. Pusey in a sermon preached at Oxford, Nov. 5, 1837, "it is even more miserable that in such a cause . . . murder, treason, rebellion, assassination, lying, perjury, secret slaughter of whole bodies at once, should ever have been justified by Divines, writing in the name of Christ."

[2] "Non fame tantum verbi Dei, sed et gladio corporali bestialiter pios insequens."—Bede, *in loc.*

It is not enough to bear the commission of Christ ; we must also imitate His virtues, or we shall not conquer as He did. Moreover, three most fearful warnings against three forms of clerical sin, the greatest impediments to the spread of the Gospel, are here set before us, in the best of all language, the imagery of a striking Allegory : the lust of worldly power, the love of money, and the determination to uphold established systems, whether they are right or wrong.

Satan corrupts communities gradually, even as he gradually undermines the principles and changes the characters of men. And the prophetic Drama, faithful to the living facts of history, traces out, step by step, the progress of this corruption in the Christian Church. Strife and the lust of temporal power first defile the White robes of a Divinely Instituted Clergy. Then comes in the love of money, when the battles of controversy have been fought out, and all differences of opinion have been crushed beneath the weight of an Established Hierarchy, supported by the Sword of the Civil Power. And lastly, when the Established Hierarchy of Christendom is assailed by the remonstrances of faithful individuals, just as the system of the Pharisees was assailed by the simple earnestness of Gospel truth, the work of Satan is completed, and the nominal Minister of Christ becomes the fierce persecutor and murderer of His faithful people.

" And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held : and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? And white robes were given unto every one of them : and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their

fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."[1]

How naturally is this scene of peace connected with its predecessor! Where are the faithful who have been slain? Where are they whose "blood has been shed like water on every side of Jerusalem"? Where are those pious, earnest, and enlightened teachers whom, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, the Rider on the Pale Horse has slain "with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth"? "The righteous perisheth," says Isaiah, "and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds."[2]

In the Vision of the Fifth Seal the same truth is symbolically represented to the eyes of the entranced Apostle. He sees the souls of all the Martyrs, including, of course, those slain in their attempts to reform, as well as to establish in the first instance, the Religion of Jesus; the Martyrs of the early Church and the Martyrs of the Reformation; arrayed in robes of White and resting beneath the Altar of God.[3]

This is so natural and easy an interpretation of the Vision of the Fifth Seal, and is so consistent with the explanations already given of the preceding visions, that it seems unnecessary to detain the reader by any further argument on the subject. The Vision of the Fourth Seal represents a Rider persecuting and killing the saints of God; and in the next scene the souls of these saints are exhibited in a state of rest and partial glory.[4] They

[1] Rev. vi. 9–11. [2] Isaiah lvii. 1, 2.

[3] "Quia Ecclesiam dixerat in præsenti multipliciter afflictam, dicet et gloriam animarum post corporum pœnam."—Bede, *in loc.*

[4] "Justis hominibus . . . præparatus est paradisus . . . ibi manere eos (dicunt) qui translati sunt usque ad consummationem, coauspicantes incorruptelam."—Irenæus, i. 728.

are further represented as praying for the Judgment: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This is, indeed, a most natural and most holy prayer. Not that these holy ones can be imagined to be influenced by any feelings of vengeance against those who had tormented them in the days of the flesh. Such feelings find no place in the hearts of pious Martyrs even in this world. Their prayer is rather that of the first Martyr: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But they pray, as all holy men must pray, whether in this world or in the world to come, for the end of all sin and sorrow; the day of final retribution, when all capable of salvation shall be saved, the honour of God vindicated, and the finally impenitent consigned to their self-sought eternity of death. The final triumph of holiness, the final defeat of all God's enemies, is the grand object of their supplications.[1]

In the answer given to their prayer is contained the prophetic portion of the vision. "It was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."[2]

Such, then, is the prediction of the Fifth Seal; that the Judgment shall not come until the ranks of the Martyrs are filled up; that, improbable as it may seem in these days, most severe trials of their faith, if not actual Martyrdom, await Christians, before Christ shall appear again for Judgment.

Moreover, this Seal is naturally connected with the one

[1] "Non hæc odio inimicorum, pro quibus in hoc sæculo rogaverunt, orant, sed amore æquitatis, qua ipsi Judici ut prope positi concordant, diem judicii quo peccati regnum destruatur, et resurrectionem extinctorum corporum advenire precantur."—Bede, *in loc.*

[2] Rev. vi. 11.

which follows it, as well as with that which goes before; with the judgments of the Sixth as well as with the persecutions of the Fourth Seal. The Fourth Seal reveals a corrupt established ministry persecuting those who attempt to reform its errors; the Fifth discloses the condition of the souls of those who die during the persecution, and their state of rest and expectation; and it also foreshows persecutions yet to come. And after this the Sixth Seal, under the awful but intelligible images of convulsions in the natural world, portends the judgments sent to punish the world for the sin of corrupting Christianity and resisting all attempts at Reformation; the earthquakes, signs, and terrors which immediately precede the Coming of Christ to judge the world.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"[1]

Respecting this fearful Judgment, nothing can be said with any certainty, except that it immediately precedes the Coming of Christ, "The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Taking into considera-

[1] Rev. vi. 12–17.

tion, however, the symbolical character of the whole Allegory of which it forms a part, and remembering that what is here described is merely what St. John himself saw when the Sixth Seal was opened, we are led to conjecture that, in all probability, natural convulsions of the earth and heaven are here used to represent those more fearful convulsions of human society, those wars and rumours of wars, those revolutions of Empires, and gigantic conspiracies of the evil against the good, which other Scriptures describe as preceding the Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. Just as the peacefulness of Messiah's Kingdom is foretold under the natural, beautiful, and poetical images of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, and the declaration that they shall neither hurt nor destroy in all His Holy Mountain; so are the judgments which shall precede His Advent foreshadowed, both in the Old and New Testament, under figures taken from the most terrific of the natural phenomena of the world. That there will be unprecedented convulsions of the earth, that is, literal earthquakes, before that universal liquefaction of the globe which literal prophecies lead us to expect at the Last Day, is highly probable; but it is not probable that these are the objects of the present vision, which, compared with other visions in this book, and with the highly figurative language of the ancient prophets, seems to point out those terrific and diabolical revolutions which are the tempests and earthquakes of human society. [1]

Time only will disclose the exact nature and extent of these Judgments. They may have begun already. The French Revolution and others may be the first throes of the "great earthquake" of the Sixth Seal. Some of these have been of a singularly ungodly character; and the infidel

[1] "In sexto sigillo factus terræ motus magnus, ipsa est illa novissima persecutio."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

notions from which they sprang cannot be said to have been eradicated from the populations of Christendom.

Now, to what are we to trace these infidel opinions, these notions subversive not only of Christianity, but of the very moral framework of society itself? There is only one sad cause, the corruption of the Church. Alas! here is the source of the evil; here is the deadly plague which has poisoned the very vitals of Christianity. "Ye are the salt of the earth," said Christ to those whom He sent forth to heal the diseases of the nations, to preserve society from putrefaction; but if the salt has lost its own savour, how shall it heal those wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores which have afflicted the body of Christendom?

Let us observe, then, the judicial character of those revolutions which have shaken Europe to its centre. The children have arisen against the mother who has neglected them. Christians have been corrupted by the World, instead of the World having been converted by Christians. Therefore the World has begun to say, in the prophetic language of David, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."[1]

The revolutions of these ages are judicial, for they are the natural consequences of the sins of Christians; of their sinful neglect of the masses of the people; of their indolence, their covetousness, and their evil example.

And what shall we say of the convulsions which have brought about the downfall of the temporal power of the Pope, and the sudden and violent overthrow of France, its chief supporter, from which she is slowly recovering? Is there nothing judicial in these? May it not be that the GREAT BABYLON of the Apocalypse means not only the Papal City, but the Whole System of Christendom connected with it? And may not the terrible judgments which

[1] Psalm ii. 3.

have fallen upon Christendom, and especially upon those nations which have been the chief supporters of Rome, be the beginning of "the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters," so graphically described in the 17th and 18th chapters of this prophecy? Because, then, these revolutions and convulsions are the natural, which is only another word for the judicial, consequences of the sins of Christendom, it is most probable that they are connected with the Vision of the Sixth Seal. We may compare them to those heavings and tremblings of the mountain which precede and predict the coming eruption; the prelusive drops of the tempest—a tempest which, though evidently at hand, may yet be many ages ere it bursts in full fury upon the inhabitants of the earth. The judgment of the latter days is predicted by the Vision of the Sixth Seal in general terms, and under the intelligible images of an earthquake, supernatural darkness and the disturbance of all the powers of the earth and sky. But this general outline will be filled up as we proceed, and other visions will enable us to conjecture what will be the character of the judgment and on whom it will fall most heavily. It is quite sufficient to observe for the present that the judgments preceding Christ's Advent are here meant, and that, consistently with this, the next Seal discloses a scene of rest and peace, the beginning of Eternal Rest. "And when he had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."[1]

We have reached the conclusion of one act, so to speak, of the Sacred Drama. In the first scene Christ, the Hero of the Allegory, appears as a Rider on a White Horse, going forth to victory. In the second, the Minister of Christ, united with the powers of the Roman Empire, is

[1] Rev. viii. 1.

"In septimo cernit initium quietis æternæ."—Bede, *in loc.*

represented under the image of a Rider on a Red Horse, with a Great Sword. And whereas the ministers of Christ used the civil power to contend with those who differed from them on Christian doctrines, this Rider employs his Sword in taking peace from the earth. In the third scene, the Minister of Christ, addicted to covetousness, is exhibited under the symbol of a Rider on a Black Horse, engaged in selling food to men. And in the fourth scene, St. John beholds the Minister of Christ, the Established Clergy of Christendom, persecuting every good man who exposed their ignorance and tried to reform their errors, under the image of a Rider on a Pale Horse engaged in slaying men, and having power over a quarter of the world.

How naturally do the scenes of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Seals come in after this! In the Fifth Seal the souls of martyrs pray for the punishment of the wicked and the final triumph of the saints; in the Sixth, the fearful revolutions which are the natural and judicial result of the sins of Christendom are represented under the figures of earthquakes and convulsions; and in the Seventh we see the future rest of the righteous intimated by the silence which succeeds the raging of the tempest.[1]

The deep silence also of the worshippers in the Temple at the hour of prayer and offering of incense must have suggested the symbolism of this Seventh Seal, a fit introduction to the succeeding Visions of Judgment on the opponents of Christ Jesus.

There is, however, a parenthetical scene introduced between the sixth and the closing scene of the act; namely, the vision of the 7th chapter, describing the safety of the

[1] "Silentium in cælo media ferme hora. Per quod significatur initium quietis æternæ: sed partem intellexit, quia interrupto silentio eam per ordinem repetit. Nam si esset juge silentium, hic finis narrand fieret."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

righteous amidst the general overthrow of the wicked. Before those general judgments, darkly foreshadowed by the earthquake and the tempest, have fallen upon the earth, an Angel is seen to seal the servants of God upon their foreheads, intimating that His Power and Grace shall secure them as His own ; that they shall have courage to stand in great boldness before their persecutors, shall bear a perfect testimony in their day of trial, and, in the end, shall be before "the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." [1]

[1] Rev. vii. 15.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLAGUE OF HAIL. THE BURNING MOUNTAIN. THE WORMWOOD

THE subject of the Apocalyptic Allegory is the warfare of the Rider on the White Horse, the warfare of Christ with the world. We have now seen, from the Vision of the Seven Seals, how that warfare was carried on by His Ordained Ministers, and with what results as regards the conversion of the world and the condition of His faithful servants.[1] We have seen that His Ordained Ministers performed their office well enough until they obtained the Sword of Civil Power; but that they then began to persecute all who opposed them. We have seen how they were then corrupted by power, and at length became addicted to covetousness and the traffic of this world. We have seen how this led them into still greater wickedness; how they persecuted and tormented all the more Faithful Servants of Christ who dared to raise their voices against them. We have seen what were the consequences of these sins on the more Faithful Servants of Christ and on the world; that the Servants of Christ died indeed under their persecutions,

[1] "Septem sigilla, quæ vidit Johannes . . . . septem sunt status Ecclesiæ sibi succedentes, ab adventu Christi usque dum in novissimo omnia consummabuntur, et Deus erit omnia in omnibus."—Anselm, D'Achery's *Spicilegium*, i. 166.

but that their souls were taken up to rest near the Throne of God; and that fearful judgments were sent upon the world in answer to their prayers, issuing in the Advent of Christ and the Silence of Eternal Rest.

A fresh act of the Drama now commences, and a new set of images is presented to the eyes of the Apostle. He beholds, in sevenfold order, the Judgments of Christ upon the world for its treatment of His Gospel; Judgments which fall on some for not accepting, and on others for corrupting the Pure Doctrines of His Religion.

The images employed in the visions of the Seven Trumpets are evidently intended to remind us of many of God's judgments on the enemies of His ancient people. The plagues of Egypt, the overthrow of Pharaoh, the Seven Trumpets of Jericho, and the destruction of Babylon, each in turn supply symbols and symbolic language for the prediction of those signal visitations which accompany the Warfare of the Gospel against its enemies.[1]

These enemies are of two kinds: those who oppose, and those who corrupt the Pure Word of God. The enemies of the former kind have been the Jews and Romans; and those of the latter, the corrupt Rulers of Christendom Ecclesiastical and Civil, the authors and supporters of erroneous doctrines, and the hypocritical professors of Christianity.

The vision of the Seven Trumpets is introduced by the following preface; or rather the following images pass before the eyes of the prophet, before the First Angel sounds his trumpet:

"I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and

[1] "Omnes plagæ Ægypti figuræ fuerunt plagarum spiritualium." —Bede, xii. 415

there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth ; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." [1]

There is little which needs explanation in this prefatory scene. It is simply preparatory to that which follows. The Angels are represented as standing before God, to intimate their readiness to perform His Will ; just as Gabriel speaks of himself as being habitually in a similar posture : " I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." [2] Then the incense of prayer is shown to ascend continually before God, through the mediation of the Angel of His Covenant ; and His Judgments are sent in answer to that prayer. For that such is the meaning of the Angel's action of taking fire from the altar and casting it upon the earth is manifest from Ezekiel's use of a similar figure, to predict the judgments about to fall upon Jerusalem. " And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hands with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city." [3]

The Vision of the First Trumpet is described in the following words : " The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth : and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." [4]

[1] Rev. viii. 2–6. [2] St. Luke i. 19.
[3] Ezek. x. 2. [4] Rev. viii. 7.

It is needless to observe that we are not to imagine this vision to predict a literal hailstorm or a literal destruction of trees and grass. St. John saw these things, and described what he saw; and we are to understand the scene described according to the rules of Allegorical interpretation. All that is certain here is just this, that a judgment of some kind is intended.

But have we, then, no means of arriving at a probable interpretation of the vision? Surely we have. We must consider its connection with the leading subject of the Allegory; the facts of history; the source of the images employed; and their use by the ancient prophets.

Now, as the Warfare of Christ is the subject of the Apocalyptic Allegory, it is natural to conclude that these visions are to be understood of those judgments which Christ has inflicted upon His adversaries. For this reason we should apply this first vision of a hailstorm, which, considered alone, might fitly be the symbol of any Divine judgments, to the first judgment which Christ inflicted upon the first opponents of His Gospel. The destruction of Jerusalem, the desolation of Judæa, and the final dispersion of the Jews by the Romans stand out conspicuously as the First Coming of Christ to Judgment. So eminently is this the case with the first that it is made by our Lord the great type of the final Judgment of the whole world at the Last Day.

With what fitness is this judgment announced by the blast of an Angel's Trumpet, the earnest of the Last Great Trumpet, which shall summon the whole human race before the Throne of the Eternal Saviour! Yet, as Jericho did not fall until the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, so neither shall the wicked be destroyed and the Canaan of Heaven opened to the risen saints of God until Six Terrific Judgments have fallen on those who oppose or corrupt the

Gospel, and until the Seventh Trumpet has announced the Coming of the Son of Man with power.

The First, then, of these judgments, most fearful, most desolating, most enduring in its effects, fell upon that nation which disowned and crucified the King of Glory; and it is powerfully represented under the natural image of a Tempest of hail and fire mingled with blood, destroying a third part of the trees of the earth, and burning up all the grass.[1]

A storm of hail is a natural image to represent the destruction of the Jewish opponents of the Gospel; and those Jewish opponents themselves may fitly be called trees, and the Jewish people grass, because similar figurative language is elsewhere applied to them.

Isaiah, having foretold that the Gospel and its preachers should go forth from Jerusalem, proceeds in the following language to describe the judgment which should fall upon the proud and unbelieving Jews, and upon all the enemies of God: "The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty . . . and upon all the cedars of Lebanon . . . and upon all the oaks of Bashan."[2] If Isaiah here uses trees to represent proud and wicked enemies of the truth, and if Israel is frequently compared to a vine, an olive, an oak, a cedar; and, when under the wrath of God, to an uprooted vine, a broken and burnt olive, a fading oak, a felled cedar, or a burning forest; how natural it is that, in a highly figurative Allegory like the Apocalypse, the First Coming of Christ to Judgment should be described by the appearance of a mighty storm of hail and fire, destroying a large portion of the trees of the earth! Such a hailstorm might of course equally well represent

[1] "Sterilem Judæorum voluntatem atque animi institutum Joannes perspiciens, infrugiferis arboribus eos comparavit, ad eorum radicem securim positam esse pronuncians."—*Isidori Pelus. Epist.* lib. i. 64.

[2] Isaiah ii. 12, 13.

any judgment on any enemies of God. But it falls on the earth when the First Trumpet sounds, and we know from Our Lord's Own Words, that He considered the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of Judæa as the beginning of judgment, and, in a figurative sense, the Coming of the Son of Man. Moreover, the ancient prophet speaks of those who destroy the unbelieving Israelites as a hailstorm sent upon the earth. To destroy the "fading flower of Ephraim the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm . . . shall cast down to the earth." [1] And again, having spoken expressly of the establishment of the Gospel, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone," he adds, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and . . . the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." [2]

But it is to be observed that only a third part of trees are destroyed, though all the grass is burnt up. In this particular also the Allegorical figures correspond with the facts of history. All the Jews were not destroyed, but a remnant exists at the present day; although this judgment, which desolated their land and city, has scattered them over the face of the earth. And then all the common people, represented by the "green grass" in the vision, according to the words of Isaiah, "surely the people is grass," [3] were no doubt dispersed by the fire and sword of the Roman.

Those Jews also who had received the Gospel escaped the terrific judgments which fell on Judæa and Jerusalem; and, being warned by the prophecies of Our Lord, fled for safety to the mountains. And then the words of Isaiah were fulfilled to the letter: "My people shall dwell . . . in quiet resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest, and the city shall be utterly abased." [4]

[1] Isaiah xxviii. 1, 2.
[2] Isaiah xxviii. 16, 17.
[3] Isaiah xl. 7.
[4] Isaiah xxxii. 18, 19.

The passages of Scripture which justify the application of the scenery of the First Trumpet to the destruction and dispersion of the Jews are too numerous to be quoted at length; but the reader may find them by the list of references given below.[1] It will be sufficient to add the poetical passage of Zechariah, in which he speaks of the judgment about to fall on Jerusalem, in language not unlike that of the passage we are considering. "Open thy doors," he cries, "O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir-tree: for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down."[2]

Such, then, we may conjecture to be the meaning of the vision of the First Trumpet. It typifies in the Allegory the First Victory of the Hero of the Drama, the Warrior on the White Horse. If Christ is the Antitype of that Rider, then the destruction of the first enemies of Christ must be signified by the burning of trees and grass.[3] These enemies

[1] Isaiah v. 7; ix. 13–19; x. 17–19; xiv. 8; Jer. iv. 4; vii. 20; v. 14, 15; xxiii. 29; xi. 16; xxi. 14; xxii. 7; xv. 4; xix. 10–14; Joel i. 19.

One cannot fail to be reminded, by this vision, of Ezekiel's symbol of the wall built with untempered mortar and destroyed by great hailstones; and of St. Paul's figurative language, in which he describes the fire of Roman persecution as that which would test the soundness of the Judaising teacher's foundation and superstructure. Our Lord's words also are remarkable. When contrasting His own sufferings with those afterwards to fall upon the hardened Jews He says, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" We might add also that His destruction of the barren fig-tree and parable of the unfruitful fig-tree in the vineyard seem to throw some light upon this vision.

[2] Zech. xi. 1, 2.

[3] "Quid hic per grandinem, nisi ira omnipotentis Dei exprimitur? . . . . Hoc est terra, quod arbores, id est, malorum summa . . . . terra enim sunt peccatores . . . . quæ spinas et tribulos vitiorum germinat, cujus consummatio juxta Apostolum in combustionem ignis

were the unconverted Jews, who crucified Him and persecuted all who believed in Him. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the desolation of the Holy Land, and the subsequent dispersion of the ancient people of God, are historical facts worthy of a place in Christian prophecy. Are we surprised to find them typified in an Allegorical Drama under the image of a terrific hailstorm, destroying a third part of the trees and burning up all the grass, when the ancient prophets had already so often employed these figures to describe the same or similar events? If it be once admitted that a literal hailstorm is not meant, it must be allowed that the desolation of a country, and dispersion of a hardened and obstinate race, is not only a good secondary meaning of the figurative language of the vision, but is also that meaning to which a study of the ancient prophets would lead us. Finally, what a practical meaning does this interpretation bring out of the vision! What a warning to the Gentile Christian in every age and country! A warning similar to that of the parable of the barren fig-tree in the vineyard; a warning which we can give to every professing Christian in the language of inspiration. The unfruitful tree shall be destroyed by the hailstones of the wrath of God. "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."[1]

erit." He explains "summa malorum" to mean Jews, heretics, and false brethren.—*Ambrosius in Apoc.* lib. 4.

[1] Rom. xi. 20–22.

"In arboribus, diversa hominum qualitas et conditio designatur. Prima tuba communem impiorum in igne et grandine designat interitum."—Bede, *in loc.*

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."[1]

Here, again, as in the previous vision, we have only very general expressions given, to which, by the aid of the context, the examination of the language of the ancient prophets, and the light of history, we may assign a particular meaning. The Second Enemies of the Christian Church were the Romans. For a long time the disciples of Christ seem not to have been distinguished by the rulers of the world from the rest of the Jews: they were regarded by the Roman magistrates as a Jewish sect. And during this time the Jews were the persecutors of Christianity. By-and-by, however, after the desolation of Judæa, Christianity was fiercely persecuted by the Roman Empire.

We may conjecture, therefore, that this Second Trumpet announces the Second Great Judgment of Christ upon the Second Great Enemy of His Religion, the Empire of the Romans.[2]

The fall of the Roman Empire, and its devastation by barbarian hordes, are represented in the Allegory by an image already adopted by Jeremiah and others to describe the fall of ancient Babylon. Moreover, the Hebrew prophet also summons the nations against her with the blast of a trumpet. "Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her. . . . Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out

[1] Rev. viii. 8, 9.

[2] "Sunt igitur significata in Tubis et Phialis . . . . aut ruina civitatum aut ruina magnæ Babylonis, id est, civitatis Romanæ."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."[1] The many nations also which destroyed Babylon are compared by Jeremiah in the same chapter to the waters of the sea. "How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! the sea has come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof." And that the prophet does not mean here a literal sea is manifest from the words which immediately follow: "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness."[2] This is indeed a favourite image with the prophets. It is used by Isaiah to describe the armies of Assyria. "The Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks."[3]

If, then, the Apocalypse is a Dramatic Allegory describing the Warfare of Christianity with the world; and if the Trumpets sound to announce the special judgments which God inflicts upon the world for its treatment of Christianity; the context of the Allegory itself, the language of the ancient prophets, and the notorious facts of history alike lead us to understand this portion of the Drama to represent the hurling of the Roman Empire into that mighty sea of nations which fought over the fallen carcase, and divided among themselves the spoils of many centuries.[4]

We may then conclude, with tolerable certainty, that the "great mountain burning with fire," which St. John saw cast into the sea when the Second Trumpet sounded, was

[1] Jer. li. 25, 27. [2] Jer. li. 41–43. [3] Isaiah viii. 7.

[4] Robertson says of the writers who witnessed and described the fall of Rome: "They compare the ruin which they (Rome's destroyers) had brought on the world to the havoc occasioned by earthquakes, conflagrations, or deluges, the most formidable and fatal calamities which the imagination of man can conceive."—*Charles V.* i. 12.

intended by the Divine Author of the Apocalypse to be the symbol of the Roman Empire, devastated by that sea of nations which a righteous God permitted to overflow its fair provinces, and to reduce them to a state of barbarism, bloodshed, and anarchy. According to the promise of Christ, the prayers of His faithful people availed, not only to destroy the barren fig-tree of Israel, but also to pluck up by the roots the destroying mountain of Rome, and to hurl it into the midst of the sea. [1]

It is called here a burning mountain with the greatest propriety. We have already seen, in the previous vision, that the trees of Israel were destroyed by fire, mingled with the hail. Rome, then, which had been the fire by which God destroyed the Jews, and by which He purified his own faithful people of their dross, is here represented as a "mountain burning with fire," before its fire has been quenched in a sea of blood.

This mountain is hurled into the sea. A symbolical act which reminds us of the word of God to Jeremiah, concerning his prophecy against Babylon. "Thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her." [2]

It is to be observed also of this Judgment, as well as of all except the Seventh and Last, that God does not make a full end in destroying. The third part of the sea becomes blood; the third part of the fishes die; and the third part only of the ships are destroyed. "The hammer of the whole earth was cut asunder and broken" [3] when Rome fell into pieces beneath the sword of her barbarian conquerors. But she was not utterly annihilated. According to the prophetic words of Daniel, the fourth kingdom was divided, and has remained ever since, partly strong and partly broken.

[1] St. Matt. xxi. 21. [2] Jer. li. 63, 64. [3] Jer. l. 23.

With reference to the other images of this vision, it may be sufficient to remark that if a Mountain is used to symbolise an Empire; and the sea into which it is hurled, the nations which overwhelm it; the preservation of the metaphor requires that individual people should be spoken of as the fishes of the sea, and cities or provinces as the ships which sail upon its surface. But it is somewhat remarkable that these figures also, even standing alone, are not uncommon. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of men without teachers as "fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them;"[1] and our Saviour employs the same metaphor in His parable of the drag-net, and in His expression to His Apostles, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

In this vision, as in that of the First Trumpet, there is an universal principle involved; a solemn admonition applicable to all ages of the world, as well as a more particular historical antitype of the symbols. The Fall of Rome was the historical fulfilment of the prophecy; but, in common with the visions of the ancient prophets which concerned immediately the fall of Babylon, it implies this further general denunciation, that God will judge and bring to nothing every nation which opposes the pure doctrines of His Holy Religion; a denunciation which may be given in the words of inspired Scripture, applicable not only to the literal but also to the spiritual seed of Abraham; "that nation whom they shall serve will I judge."[2] Surely this declaration should inspire us with the confidence of the Psalmist: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."[3]

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star

[1] Hab. i. 14, 15. [2] Gen. xv. 14. [3] Psalm xlvi. 1, 2.

from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.'[1]

The general meaning of this vision may be ascertained with tolerable certainty, if we compare the language in which it is described with the rest of Holy Scripture. When the ancient prophets wished to describe numerous armies, tumultuous masses of people, or the irresistible course of desolating conquerors, they chose their metaphors from the sea, the floods, and the violent effects of overflowing rivers. "The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof."[2] "Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves and the tumult of the people."[3] These images are natural and obvious; the devastations of a flood may well represent the desolating march of a conquering host.

With like propriety rivers and fountains, from their refreshing and fertilising properties, are used to represent Divine blessings and graces, both natural and spiritual. "The waters of Shiloah that go softly" are the favour and protection of Jehovah. And because the people refuse them "The Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria, and all his glory."[4] Those who rejoice in the comfort and strength of Jehovah "with joy shall draw water out of the wells of salvation."[5] "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses."[6]

[1] Rev. viii. 10, 11. [2] Jer. li. 42. [3] Psalm lxv. 7.
[4] Isaiah viii. 7. [5] Isaiah xii. 3 [6] Isaiah xliv. 3, 4.

The Gospel issuing from Jerusalem is thus described by Zechariah: "It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem:"[1] a metaphor adopted by our Lord Himself on more than one occasion, as in His conversation with the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."[2]

That water for drinking, or water regarded as the necessary support of life, is intended in the vision we are considering is manifest from the context. For St. John saw that "many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." These persons, therefore, evidently drank the waters by which they were killed.

There is, then, good reason to believe that the Rivers and Fountains of Waters upon which the Star called Wormwood falls represent those "living waters" of which our Saviour speaks: the spiritual graces and eternal truths, which are as necessary to the life of man's soul as water is to the support of his body.

But this vision must surely represent a Judgment falling upon men for their treatment of the Gospel; for the Seer beholds the Star called Wormwood falling from heaven upon those waters, which otherwise would support human life, and changing them into a cause of death.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they complained of the water which they found in the wilderness because it was bitter, and Moses miraculously sweetened the waters by throwing into them a piece of wood from a tree which God showed him. St. John sees the exact contrary of this transacted in the vision we are examining. The Water which men would otherwise drink, and find to be the support of their life, is here, by the falling of some-

[1] Zech. xiv. 8. [2] St. John iv. 10.

thing into it, made bitter, and so unwholesome as to cause death in many who drink it.

We must next inquire, therefore, in what secondary senses other inspired writers use the images of a Star, of Wormwood, and of Bitterness.

A star falling from heaven might mean any great person falling from some lofty position in the world, from some height of temporal power. The King of Babylon, hurled from his throne and slain, is compared by Isaiah to the morning star falling from heaven. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"[1] This, however, can hardly be the meaning of the symbol here; for there is no connection between the fall of a great temporal prince and a corruption of Gospel graces and doctrines. The Star in the vision is called Wormwood; and by falling into the waters it makes them bitter and unwholesome. Now, we know nothing in history of any temporal prince who, through falling from power, became the cause of any corruption of spiritual graces. And the Star in the vision seems to fulfil its very mission by embittering the waters: it seems to be the very agent, cause, or instrument of the Judgment, and not to be deprived of power by its fall from heaven, but to derive its power to do harm by that falling. The Star is evidently a Messenger sent from Heaven in wrath to make the Waters Bitter, and to cause the death of those who drink them. All the imagery of the vision and its position in the Sacred Allegory mark out this "great star, burning as it were a lamp," to be the messenger of the wrath of God.

There is, then, in Scripture another sense given to this image of a star more congenial to the symbolism of this vision.

[1] Isaiah xiv. 12.

In a good sense stars are in this very prophecy explained to mean religious teachers, the ministers of the Church. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches."[1]

But the image cannot here be understood in a good sense. For the work of death is assigned to the great burning star which St. John sees falling from heaven. Is it not, then, most probable that the Star here means a Religious Teacher who, by his false doctrines, destroys the spiritual life of those who accept his errors? And will not Scripture justify this interpretation? It certainly will do so. The very same image is adopted by St. Jude in his description of those false teachers of whom he thus speaks: "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . These are spots in your feasts of charity . . . wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."[2]

We cannot, then, be far wrong if we conclude that this Great Burning Star in the Allegory stands as the symbol of some Teacher of False Religion; of doctrines so false as to be fatal to the salvation of those who believe them; some Teacher who, like those mentioned by St. Jude, has turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and denied our Lord Jesus Christ.[3]

Now, who was permitted by God to inflict this kind of punishment upon the world for its treatment of Christi-

[1] Rev. i. 20. [2] St. Jude, 4, 12, 13.

[3] "Tertia hæreticos ecclesia decidentes, Sanctæ Scripturæ flumina corrumpentes (designat) . . . Hæretici, quos Judas Apostolus sidera seductionis appellat . . . flamma suæ nequitiæ fontes divinarum conantur inficere Scripturarum. . . . Absinthii nomine digni, cujus immixtio modica magnam solet amaricare dulcedinem."—Bede, *in loc.*

anity? Who stands out conspicuously in history as the Scourge of Christendom? Who completed in the East the havoc which the Northern Barbarians commenced upon the Western portion of the Roman Empire? Who so turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and denied our Lord Jesus Christ as that strange, that almost miraculous impostor who, from driving camels in Arabia, went forth to found a religion which long threatened to annihilate the religion of Jesus, and to plant the triumphant Crescent in every province of Christendom?[1]

But we must inquire further whether the remaining details of the scene tend to the confirmation of this interpretation. In what sense do we find Wormwood and Bitterness used by the ancient prophets?

Jeremiah uses the expression "water of gall" to describe the punishment of his people for their sin: "The Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord."[2] "Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the heathen."[3]

In the same language the punishment of hypocritical prophets is described: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for

[1] "While the State was exhausted by the Persian war, and the Church was distracted by the Nestorian and Monophysite sects, Mohammed, with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, erected his throne on the ruins of Christianity and of Rome. The genius of the Arabian prophet, the manners of his nation, and the spirit of his religion, involve the causes of the decline and fall of the Eastern Empire . . . e of the most memorable revolutions which have impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the globe."—Gibbon, c. 50.

[2] Jer. viii. 14. [3] Jer. ix. 15, 16; comp. Lam. iii. 15, 19.

from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land." [1]

Wormwood, in the language of Amos, stands for the opposite of that judgment and righteousness which giveth life: "Seek the Lord and ye shall live . . . . Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth." [2] "Ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." [3]

The sinful state of heart of the wicked Simon is called by St. Peter "the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." [4] And by a most natural metaphor those apostatising brethren, whose evil example might lead others to like wickedness, are called both by Moses and St. Paul, bitter roots. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." [5] "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." [6]

After this comparison, then, of the symbols of the vision with the metaphorical language of other inspired writers, we seem almost compelled to conclude that the Great Burning Star must denote some great "root of bitterness," some "wandering star," some great polluter of the waters of religion, some one who has poisoned the fountains of religious truth by licentious doctrines mingled with

[1] Jer. xxiii. 15. [2] Amos v. 6, 7. [3] Amos vi. 12.
[4] Acts, viii. 23. [5] Deut. xxix. 18.
[6] Heb. xii. 15. Thus Justin describes the unbelieving Jews as πικρίας μὲν διδάγματα καὶ ἀθεότητος συμπίνοντες, τὸν δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγον ἀποπτύοντες.—*Dial. cum Tryph.* c. 120. And Irenæus calls simony "amarum et malignum principis apostasiæ serpentis venenum."—Lib. i. c. 27.

them, and by denying the Lord Jesus; some Great Conspicuous Impostor or Apostate, who has left indelible traces of his teaching in the world, and from whom have issued waters of doctrine poisoning the souls and destroying the life of those who drink them. Who, in the history of the world, in the history of the struggles of Christianity with the world, comes up to this idea except the Arabian Prophet? Who so evidently came into the world with a mission from the Evil One? Who so took mankind by surprise by the suddenness of his appearance and the miracles of his success? What greater Scourge has fallen on Eastern Christians, for their sins and worldliness and contentions, than that religion which threatened for many ages to overflow the whole length and breadth of Christendom?

But perhaps it may be wrong to confine the meaning of this vision to the imposture of Mohammed. It does not follow that, because the source of evil in the vision is represented by a single star, we are therefore compelled to look for one great corrupter of religion in the world. The vision, after all, may be intended to point out that righteous judgment of the Almighty which fell upon all Christendom shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire; the universal corruption of the morality and doctrines of Christianity. At all events, this is the great practical lesson of the vision. It reminds us how God punishes men by turning their very food into poison, the fountains of salvation into the wells of death.

It embodies in short, and expresses in most poetical language, the imprecation of the Psalmist, "Let their table be made a snare to take themselves withal: and let the things which should have been for their wealth be unto them an occasion of falling."[1] The doctrines of Divine Revelation are in themselves the very water of life to mankind:

[1] Psalm lxix. 23.

yet, when mingled with the wormwood of error, how often have they become the cause of most hardened and cruel wickedness! It is a trite but no less true observation that error is dangerous in proportion as it embodies more or less of truth. And many, we know, have been so hardened in heart by the maxims of religion, mixed with evil principles, as to slay the true servants of God while they thought that they were doing God service.

It was just this mixture of the doctrines of Revelation with his own wicked inventions which made the religion of Mohammed at once so successful and so destructive of the human soul. His system is a mixture of lofty sentiments and strict morality on some points, with the grossest sensuality on others. He did not cast aside the existing religions of the world and set up his own imposture in their place. No; he accepted them all, and moulded them into his system. To adopt the metaphorical language of the Apocalypse, he allowed the waters of life to flow on, but infused into them the bitter wormwood of his own inventions.

On the whole, therefore, it seems most probable that Mohammed was the Scourge specially denoted by the Great Burning Star of this vision; but that, like the other prophecies of Scripture, the language of St. John contains a principle of Divine Judgment, and conveys a warning of solemn and universal interest, which is capable of application as well to individuals as to societies of men, in all ages of the world's history.

The principle is this: that when God is angry with us He often punishes us by changing our food into poison, those things which should have been for our good into an occasion of falling.

The warning is, of course, no less obvious—that we take care how we use the blessings and graces of religion,

lest it be with us as with the man out of whom the evil spirit went but returned to him in sevenfold strength; lest our last end be worse than the first: lest, after we have refused "with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation," the Lord in anger should "feed us with wormwood and give us water of gall to drink."

CHAPTER VII

THE DARK AGES—THE ERA OF REVOLUTIONS

"AND the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."[1]

This partial darkening of the lights of heaven seems to point to the intellectual, religious, and judicial darkness of the Middle Ages.

The darkness of ignorance is one of the worst judgments which God inflicts on men. And in the case either of nations or of individuals it generally follows a long course of obstinate disobedience and neglect of previous chastisements.[2] "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed."[3] "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."[4]

[1] Rev. viii. 12.

[2] "Qui fugerunt lumen, juste inhabitabunt tenebras. Quemadmodum autem in hoc temporali lumine, qui fugiunt illud, ipsos se tenebris mancipant . . . sic æternum Dei qui fugiunt lumen . . . sibi causa sunt, ut æternas inhabitent tenebras."—Irenæus, i. 705.

[3] Isaiah vi. 9, 10.

[4] 2 Thess. ii. 11.

With such and many similar passages of Scripture before us, we cannot doubt the solemn truth that there is such a thing as judicial darkness, that ignorance and delusion are the just punishments of those who do not make use of the means of obtaining light.

But there was something even more obviously judicial in the darkness of the Middle Ages. It was the natural result of three principal causes : the fall of Rome in the West ; the wasting conquests of the Mohammedans in the East ; and the worldliness, indolence, and avarice of the Church throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. Thus the intellectual and religious darkness of mediæval Christendom was the result of those previous judgments. Christendom was chastised by the devastations of Goths and Vandals, and the conquests of Mohammed ; and these two punishments were of long continuance, their effects being felt for many centuries in that gross darkness which covered the Christian nations.[1]

Now, as in the Allegory of the Apocalypse the visions of the Seven Trumpets seem to represent under symbols God's judgments on the world for its treatment of Chris-

[1] The darkening of the heavenly bodies is a common metaphor for intellectual ignorance and superstition. "All these symptoms of decay," says an editor of Gibbon, "were either the means or the consequences of hierarchical tyranny. This, at its earliest outset, spread around it the first shades of mental darkness. In proportion as it advanced the gloom deepened, and the hour of its culmination was the noon of night."

"No circumstance is so prominent on the first survey of society during the earlier centuries of this period as the depth of ignorance in which it was immersed. . . . An inconceivable cloud of ignorance overspread the whole face of the Church, hardly broken by a few glimmering lights, who owe almost the whole of their distinction to the surrounding darkness. . . . If we look more accurately, there will appear certain gradual shades of twilight on each side of the greatest obscurity." —Hallam's *Middle Ages*, c. 9.

tianity ; as the First, Second, and Third of those Trumpets appear to announce respectively the destruction of the Jews, the fall of the Western Empire, and the devastation of the Eastern Empire by the Mohammedans, the three most prominent events in the history of those ages : so the partial darkening of the celestial luminaries in this vision, inasmuch as it cannot relate to literal eclipses of the sun and moon, seems to refer to that Fourth Great Judgment which was inflicted on Christendom, the Darkness and Barbarism of the Middle Ages.

What other historical fact is there more pregnant with warning, more universal in its application, more manifestly judicial, and, in a word, more worthy of a place in prophecy? Or, still further, what state of things can we find in the whole course of history which offers so easy, unforced, and natural an interpretation of the symbolism of this particular vision?

All that the prophet perceives in the present vision is a diminution of light. The sun, moon, and stars, all the sources of light during the night or day, are partially darkened. Doubtless it seemed to the Apostle as though these celestial luminaries were suddenly rendered a third less bright than usual. But the judicial character of the vision is still more emphatically marked by the expression "was smitten." The sources of light were smitten by the Divine Judgment, and, as a consequence, their brightness was diminished.

Now this symbolism is by no means uncommon in ancient prophecies ; a partial darkening of the celestial bodies represents very often a period of great trouble or of great ignorance and judicial blindness. The prophet Amos, having blamed Israel for their covetousness and oppression of the needy, says, "Shall not the land tremble for this? . . . it shall come to pass in that day, saith the

Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."[1] And that he means by this a diminution not of natural but of spiritual light is manifest from the words which immediately follow, and which intimate that religious teaching should be very defective in those days: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."[2] Thus a time of judicial darkness and religious ignorance is here represented by the prophet under the natural images of a partial darkening of the sun and moon and a scarcity of food. Religion being the light and food of man's soul, a period of superstition and ignorance is fitly represented as a time of famine and darkness.

In like manner Isaiah describes an opposite state of things, a continuance of God's favour and the light of religion, in the following words: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself."[3] And it is certain the prophet did not mean to say that the literal sun would always be shining, for in the verse immediately before he had said, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light."[4]

Every reader of such passages will see that a Light far more bright and heavenly than that of sun or moon was promised to the faithful people of God by His prophet; and that the brightest images of the natural world were chosen to represent the spiritual blessings of the Light of God's Eternal Favour.

Again, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses predicts the judicial blindness of the Jews under similar figures: "The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and

[1] Amos viii. 9.
[2] Amos viii. 11.
[3] Isaiah lx. 20.
[4] Isaiah lx. 19.

astonishment of heart: and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways." [1]

The prophet Isaiah, lamenting the sins of the people and describing their consequent calamities, says, "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night." [2]

The punishment of wicked prophets is thus described by Micah: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them." [3]

No strange imagery, then, has been adopted in this vision by the Author of this Divine Allegory. He has used figures with which the readers of the ancient prophecies were already familiar. It was necessary to symbolise a period of almost universal darkness, anarchy, barbarism, and judicial blindness. And He caused the Apostle to perceive, on the sounding of the Fourth Trumpet, a sudden diminution of the Light of the Celestial Luminaries. All along, in these visions, objects of the inanimate world have been the representatives in the Allegory of their corresponding truths in the world of human affairs. Trees and grass destroyed by hail have stood for the Jewish nation slain and scattered into all lands by the fire and sword of the Roman. The downfall of that destroying Empire has been symbolised, like that of ancient Babylon, by a Great Burning Mountain hurled into the midst of the ocean. Fertilising streams and fountains, embittered by the infusion into them of a poisonous root, have allegorised the noxious

[1] Deut. xxviii. 28, 29. [2] Isaiah lix. 9, 10. [3] Micah iii. 6.

tenets of Mohammed engrafted upon the doctrines of revealed truth, and causing the destruction of many immortal souls and many fair churches and provinces of Christendom. How naturally, then, and how consistently does he continue to use images and symbols of the same character! How fitly does he represent the ignorance and barbarism of the Middle Ages by a sudden and great diminution of the natural light of heaven![1]

And here again, as in all the other visions of this prophecy, a great practical lesson is conveyed by symbols by no means difficult to understand. The very sources of light are smitten by God in judgment whenever men refuse to avail themselves of the advantages of light, whenever they obstinately prefer darkness to light because their deeds are evil. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."[2] "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."[3] Darkness overshadowed the whole of Christendom for many ages, because men had refused to walk in the pure light of the Gospel; and because the very teachers of religion had become ambitious, covetous, and lovers of this world.[4] And that which happened to nations in those days happens now to individuals who walk not in the light, and refuse to become the children of light. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the

[1] This is indeed the common language of human writers. "We have hitherto," says Robertson, "been contemplating the progress of that darkness which spread over Europe from its first approach to the period of greatest obscuration; a more pleasant exercise begins here, to observe the first dawnings of returning light."—*Charles V.* i. 25.

[2] St. John iii. 19. [3] 2 Thess. ii. 11.

[4] "A Deo constituti, testimonio Apostoli loquentis ad Philippenses, sicut luminaria in mundo . . . spirituales oculi terrenorum fæce turbati et obtenebrati sunt."—*Pet. Bles. Serm.* 57.

god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." [1] "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." [2] Spiritual darkness or blindness of understanding is the natural and judicial result of a wicked life, of habitual resistance to the voice of conscience and the convictions of reason. And this is especially the case with those who ought to be the teachers of the truth. God always smites with spiritual blindness those who, from their position, ought to be the dispensers of light, but who, like the old Pharisees, abuse the authority entrusted to them. So that the threat of the prophet Micah "concerning the prophets that make (the) people err" always takes effect under similar circumstances, a threat expressed, as we have seen, in words similar to those of this vision: "Night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them." [3]

"And the Fifth Angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." [4]

That the Judgment announced by this Trumpet is more formidable than any of its predecessors is intimated by the words of the angel, "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound." [5]

The Judgment immediately preceding was that of the Darkness of Mediæval Christendom, a great historical fact presenting an easy and adequate interpretation of the symbols of the Fourth Trumpet. The darkness was

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. [2] 1 John ii. 11. [3] Micah iii. 5, 6.
[4] Rev. ix. 1. [5] Rev. viii. 13.

followed by a somewhat sudden return of light.[1] The art of printing was invented, knowledge increased, and the minds of men seemed to awake at last from the slumber of centuries.

But light has its dangers as well as darkness. The rapid spread of knowledge, which happily led to the Reformation, sowed also, from its abuse, the seeds of many an evil plant, which it required several ages to bring to maturity. At last the time came. The smouldering fire burst forth, as it were, in a moment. Christendom was shaken to its centre by the convulsions of the French Revolution. Nay, such a state of things has been brought about by the evil principles which both caused the Revolution, and also were more widely circulated by the licence of those times, that Revolutions have become Characteristic Features of the Age we live in.

Now it seems highly probable that the symbols of this Trumpet relate to what we may call the Era of Revolutions.

The vision itself, by means of imagery taken from the plagues of Egypt, predicts a wide and wasting judgment; a judgment more general and more severe than any of its predecessors; a judgment executed by some One Eminent Person at the head of countless multitudes; a judgment inflicted by most diabolical agents upon those who are not the true servants of God.

Such is the general meaning of the symbols; but since the Apocalypse is an Allegory in which the Warfare of Christ and His Religion with the world is described under symbols, the application of each particular act of the drama to the historical agents in the great struggle must be

[1] "The sun was now fully above the horizon, though countries less fortunately circumstanced did not immediately catch his beams." —Hallam's *Middle Ages*, ch. 9.

deduced from a comprehensive view of the Whole Plan of the Prophecy.

Having in the present instance ascertained from other Scriptures the general meaning of the symbols, we must seek in history some Wide and Wasting Judgment taking place in an age subsequent to the Dark Ages symbolised by the preceding vision.

First, then, let us examine the language of the vision, with the view of ascertaining its general meaning.

When the Fifth Trumpet sounded, St. John saw a Star which had come down from heaven. At least he so describes the Person whom he beheld. That He was not simply a star, in the common sense of that word, is evident from the action immediately attributed to him of receiving a key. The Seer beholds this person receiving a key, and therewith opening the Abyss.

Now there is another passage in the Revelation, in which an Angel is described as having the Key of the Abyss. In the 20th chapter St. John describes an Angel coming down from heaven, " having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand." And he sees this Angel laying hold of the Devil, casting him into the Abyss, shutting him up, and setting a seal upon him, with the purpose of preventing him from deceiving the nations for a stated time. In the same vision it is predicted that after the lapse of that time, at some period before the resurrection of the dead, Satan should be loosed again ; that he should then again deceive the nations, attempt to destroy the people of God, but be himself judged by God, and cast into the lake of fire.

There is, then, every reason to believe that the Angel who imprisons and releases Satan in the 20th chapter is the same person who in this vision comes down from heaven and opens the Abyss. The same event, which in this vision is represented by the opening of the Abyss, is

represented in the vision of the 20th chapter by the loosing of Satan from his prison.

But there is this difference observable in the two visions. In the vision of the 20th chapter Satan is spoken of openly and by name, but the vision we are considering relates to those human agents by whom Satan, when loosed from his prison, begins to attempt the deception of the nations. Satan is an invisible spirit, and his influence in this world is seen, not immediately, but through the wickedness of those who listen to his temptations and carry out his evil designs. And so, in the vision of the Fifth Trumpet, we are shown, not Satan himself, but his deluded instruments.

The most eminent of these is mentioned at the close of the vision, and is called the Angel of the bottomless pit, and the King of the destroying locusts. For it does not seem at all probable that the Angel of the bottomless pit, and the Star-like Person who opens the bottomless pit, relate to the same agent. The former is an instrument of evil, and is called the Destroyer; the latter is one who has power over the bottomless pit, either to close or to open it at His pleasure. In this prophecy there is only One to Whom this power is attributed, and Who also calls Himself a Star. "I, Jesus . . . . am the bright and morning star."[1] "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death."[2] "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David: he that openeth and no man shutteth: and shutteth and no man openeth."[3]

There seems, then, every reason to believe that the symbolical circumstance of a Star descending[4] from heaven,

[1] Rev. xxii. 16. [2] Rev. i. 18. [3] Rev. iii. 7.

[4] The English expression, "I saw a star fall from heaven" (πεπτωκότα), means only, "I saw a starlike person come down swiftly

receiving a Key, and therewith opening the bottomless pit denotes, in plainer language, just this: that Christ, Who alone has "the keys of hell and of death," Who alone is able to bind and restrain Satan, allows him, on particular occasions, unusual power to deceive the nations; and so that, at the precise time intimated by this vision, Satan should be permitted by Christ to punish the world for its treatment of His religion, in a conspicuous and unusually terrific manner.

The nature of the judgment, brought about by the machinations of the Evil One, is further intimated by the other symbols of the vision. But thus much seems to be declared by the Symbol of the Star unlocking the Abyss, that in the days of this Trumpet greater liberty than usual should be given to the powers of evil to torment men for their abuse of Christ's religion.

The next question which naturally suggests itself is this: What is meant by the bottomless pit? Does it mean Hell? Or does it signify the tumultuous masses of the people? The ocean, and especially a tempestuous ocean, is one of the commonest images in Scripture of the tumultuous populace raging against the restraints of Divine and human law. The literal meaning of the words here rendered "bottomless pit" is "the well or reservoir of the Abyss." And the Abyss, in the Septuagint, generally means "the deep," "a mass of raging waters."[1]

But, as regards the practical meaning of the symbol, it

from heaven." The same word is used by Homer to describe the swift descent of Mercury on a benevolent message from the gods: ἐξ αἰθέρος ἔμπεσε πόντῳ.—*Od.* v. 50.

[1] "Terram cum abyssis," the earth and seas.—Irenæus, lib. iv. c. 19.

"Forte . . . turbulentam hujus sæculi vitam, quæ tunc cessabit, maris nomine figuravit."—Bede, *in Apoc.* xxi. 1.

is immaterial whether we understand by the bottomless pit the raging populace or the abode of evil spirits. For Satan does not appear here in his own person, but only in that of the instruments of his will. So that whether we understand the unlocking of the Abyss to denote the withdrawal of Divine restraint from Satan, or the letting loose the unbridled passions of evil men, the meaning will be very much the same. What is the unbridling of man's passions, and giving him power to carry into effect his evil purposes, but the unchaining of Satan and the permitting him to work evil in the world?

It is very important to the just understanding of this vision to observe that the point here is the permission given to men to carry into effect their evil purposes.

The vision does not necessarily imply that men should be more wicked than usual in the days of this Trumpet. But it implies the withdrawal, to some extent, of those Providential restraints upon the madness of the people, without which it would be impossible, at any time, to live peaceably in the world. God stilleth the raging of the waves and the madness of the people, and therefore we have peace. But when He means to punish us for our neglect of His Religion, He allows Satan to inflame the people to an excess of folly and madness, till they rise in fierce anger against their rulers, and trample under foot the laws of God and man.

Alison, indeed, writes thus concerning the causes of the French Revolution:

"Effects so various could not have arisen in the ordinary course of human events. The talent developed was too great, the wickedness committed too appalling, to be explained on the usual principles of human nature. It seemed rather as if some higher powers had been engaged in a strife in which man was the visible instrument; as if the demons

of hell had been let loose to scourge mankind, and the protection of Heaven for a time withdrawn from virtue, to subject its firmness to the severest test. The fancy of antiquity would have peopled the scene with hostile deities supporting unseen the contests of armies; the severer genius of Christianity beheld in it the visible interposition of Almighty Power, to punish the sins of a corrupted world!"[1]

Let this point, then, be kept in view in our examination of the remainder of the vision: that the Unlocking of the bottomless pit signifies the withdrawal of Providential restraint from the Devil, and from those wicked men, his instruments, who are ever ready, when permitted, to throw the world into confusion.

The Seer next beholds the smoke rising out of the bottomless pit. This is, of course, the natural result of the opening of the pit. If the pit is opened, the smoke must ascend from it.

The darkening of the sun and air, as we have already seen in the previous vision, denotes, in Scriptural language, a state of distress, confusion, and anarchy. So that we have here a second point of interest elicited from the examination of this vision. The first disclosure of the vision is the withdrawal of Providential restraint from the powers of evil; the second is the production by them of a state of confusion and anarchy in the world.

But is not this precisely what happened in the great Revolution of 1789? Were not the powers of evil allowed to punish men at that time? They are always ready to turn the world upside down. But did not God at that particular time withdraw the restraints of His Providence in a very unusual manner, and allow the wicked to throw everything into confusion? Moreover, does not every statesman in

[1] *History of Modern Europe*, Introduction, p. 5.

Christendom regard with apprehension the present aspect of affairs in almost every nation?[1]

In all probability the revolutions which are past are as nothing compared with those which are to come, though we may hope and pray that they will not come in our days. Christendom is, indeed, like the crater of some huge volcano. The elements of evil are all below the surface; and their presence is from time to time attested by those dense clouds of distress and anarchy which darken the sun of the political heaven. The Great Revolution was the beginning of this state of things; the precise time when, according to the general language of this prophecy, Christ withdrew those restraints which He generally puts upon the wicked; and, to judge Christian nations for their treatment of Christianity, allowed Satan to stir up a whole warlike nation against the institutions, society, and religion of Christendom. This seems to have been the beginning of sorrows, the First Woe, the beginning of the judgment of the Fifth Trumpet, and there is every reason to fear that the time of this vision has not yet run out. The future historian will doubtless regard this as the Era of Revolutions. But how soon they will be rendered impossible by

[1] It is somewhat remarkable, and tends to confirm the conclusion that the opening of the Abyss in this vision is a figurative description of the withdrawal of Providential restraint from the agents of revolutionary violence, that the same metaphorical description of the revolutions of our age has been employed in several journals. In the *Saturday Review*, No. 118, in an article on "The Imperial System," the writer uses this expression: "A store of retributive hatred is laid up for us in case of the arrival of what people have agreed to call the 'ABYSS'—that is, the return to power of the Liberal party in France." "Another good excuse for politic sycophancy is, that the Emperor preserves France and even Europe from an 'ABYSS.'" In the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a writer, speaking of the Second French Revolution, says, "L'abîme se rouvrit." Compare this with Rev. ix. 2, "Il ouvrit le puits de l'abîme."

the invariable issue of such movements, crushing despotism; or how soon they will have accomplished the wise ends for which Providence has permitted them to take place, God only knows. The fearful thought is enough for us, that these Revolutions are manifestly God's judgments on Christendom for its treatment of Christianity; for this will incite us to amend our ways, to put away the evil from among us, and may lead to the exemption of our own highly-favoured nation from the troubles which fall on others. In the days of evil and distress of nations may God say to us, as He said to His ancient Israel, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." [1]

Up to this point, then, the vision has prefigured two facts. 1. The Unlocking of the Bottomless Pit; or, in plainer words, the withdrawal of Providential restraint from the wicked. 2. The Rising up of Smoke out of the mouth of the Abyss, which darkens the sun; or the first natural result of the withdrawal of restraint from the wicked; namely, confusion and anarchy, the throwing down of all ruling powers, and the gloomy chaos of democratic violence.

The prophet next beholds a still further result of the opening of the pit. "There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." [2]

Now, it is quite immaterial, so far as the practical bearing of this vision is concerned, whether we regard these Locusts as the evil principles which partly led to the great Revolution and partly were propagated by it; or whether we take them to mean the evil men who act upon those principles. In either case, it is obvious, the teaching of

[1] Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21. [2] Rev. ix. 3.

Scripture will be the same. The evil is wrought by the evil principles suggested by Satan, who is permitted to deceive the nations again in spite of all the light and long-standing of Christianity; and infidel men are the agents whom Satan employs for his purpose.

Moreover, Locusts, as symbols, have a fixed and definite meaning, determined by their emblematic use by the ancient prophets. They represent numerous and most destructive instruments of the Wrath of God. And the Locusts in the present vision are invested with additional terrors, inasmuch as they are not only described as the most destructive kind of locusts, but are also compared to scorpions, insects used in Scripture for malicious and infidel men: "Son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and though thou dost dwell among scorpions." [1]

It will, therefore, lead to no satisfactory result to attempt to trace any external resemblance between the Locusts here described and Saracens, Turks, or the soldiers of any other nation. Swarms of locusts might, indeed, very justly be regarded as the symbols of numerous and destructive armies, and as such they are used in the other Scriptures; but this is the case because locusts, like armies, are numerous and destructive, not because anything about them resembles the turbans, helmets, or long hair of any kind of soldier.

This position will be confirmed by a close examination of the details of the vision, and of the description given by the Seer of the Locusts which he beheld. His description of these Locusts is not altogether new, for in many particulars it resembles that of other prophets; and any details which cannot be thus accounted for are divested of difficulty when we remember the common Oriental

[1] Ezek. ii. 6.

custom of representing important truths by symbolic figures made up of the parts of more than one animal.[1] It is natural to expect in the miraculous appearance of these Locusts before the eyes of the Seer some marks which should betray the Allegorical nature of the whole scene, and "the interpenetration of the thing signifying and the thing signified,"[2] which properly belongs to the Allegory. And it is also natural that, in Oriental fashion, this interpenetration should be marked by the addition to the signifying animal of some part of another animal which might be easily suggestive of the thing signified. Thus the Seer's mind is taken off from the consideration of the literal insect, the locust, by observing the man's face, the woman's hair, the scorpion's tail and sting, the lion's teeth, the golden crowns, the king called Destroyer; and from hearing the strange command given them not to eat the herbs, their natural food, but to torment men.[3] Many of these attributes may be accounted for as belonging to the poetical description of mere natural locusts. Thus, in Calmet's Dictionary by Taylor, the following passage is translated from Niebuhr: "An Arab of the desert near Bosra informed me of a singular comparison of the locust with other animals. The terrible locust of chap. ix. of the

[1] I need scarcely remind the reader how much light has been thrown on this kind of symbolism by the disinterment of the idols of Nineveh. All that is most excellent in nature is embodied as it were in one animal. The strength of the ox, the courage of the lion, the swiftness of the eagle, and the wisdom of man are given to one prodigious creation of the fancy. This throws much light also on the opening vision and permanent scenery of this Allegory, the four animals around the throne of the Almighty, the representatives of all that is most noble in God's creation.

[2] Archbishop Trench on the Parables, ch. i. p. 8.

[3] "Ostendit locustas homines esse, quæ non ad fœnum, sed ad homines mittuntur."—Bede, *in loc.*

Apocalypse not then occurring to me, I regarded this comparison as a jest of the Arab, and I paid no attention to it, till it was repeated by another from Bagdad. It was thus: he compared the head of the locust to that of the horse; its breast to that of the lion; its feet to those of the camel; its body to that of the serpent; its tail to that of the scorpion; its horns, if I mistake not, to the locks of hair of a virgin."

The Scriptural figures used in speaking of locusts resemble those employed by St. John. The Apostle says they are like horses prepared for battle; and the words of Joel are, "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run."[1] "On their heads," writes St. John, "were as it were crowns of gold." These, then, were not literally golden crowns, but something which looked like crowns, and were probably of a bright yellow colour, the colour of many locusts. Though crowns are nowhere ascribed to these insects, yet the following words of Nahum are brought to mind by the mention of this emblem: "Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers."[2] "Their faces were as it were the faces of men," says the Apostle; and Joel adds to his description, "As horsemen so shall they run." "They shall run like mighty men."[3] "They had hair as it were the hair of women," that is, long hair; and Jeremiah speaks of a hairy locust in the following words: "Cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars;" where the word rendered "rough" means in the Hebrew rough with hair, and the word rendered "caterpillars" means, no doubt, a species of locust, and is so rendered in the Septuagint.

Joel adds lion's teeth to the locusts, which "lay waste the vine" and "bark the fig-tree" of Israel: "whose teeth

[1] Joel ii. 4. [2] Nahum iii. 17. [3] Joel ii. 4, 7.

are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion." [1] The sound of their wings also is by Joel and St. John compared to the noise of chariots. "Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap." [2]

The words of Joel, indeed, like those of St. John, meant more than locusts; and, under the similitude of a swarm of those devouring insects, pointed in general terms to the numerous and destructive instruments of the wrath of an Offended God. "The contexture of the passage (in Joel, and we may add in St. John) is extremely curious; and the double destruction to be produced by locusts, and the enemies of which they were the harbingers, is painted with the most impressive force, and described with the most terrible accuracy." [3]

This is, no doubt, the true way of regarding the description of locusts both in Joel and in the Apocalypse. As Our Lord, by the use of hyperbolical language in His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, made that event a type of the end of the world, so Joel, in predicting the approach of a plague of locusts and describing their devastations, darkly shadows forth the coming of those countless armies which should execute the judgment of God upon his devoted country.

Now, in like manner, the Author of the Apocalypse, in the vision of the Fifth Trumpet, does not indeed predict the coming of literal locusts; but, adopting imagery already used by Joel and explained by the fulfilment of his prophecies, prefigures the approach of multitudes of malicious and infidel men. Such men are allowed, as a judgment upon Christendom for its corruption and neglect of Christianity, to throw all things into confusion, and to be

[1] Joel i. 6. [2] Joel ii. 5.

[3] Calmet's *Dict. of the Bible.*

the scourge of those nations chiefly whose rulers have been most active in supporting that corruption.[1]

The objects of this judgment are mentioned in the prophecy. They are "those men only which have not the seal of God on their foreheads;" that is, of course, those who are not the true servants of God. The true servants of God were all represented in the 7th chapter of the Apocalypse as sealed on their foreheads. We must therefore conclude that those who are not so sealed are not His servants. They may be indeed professing Christians, just as the Pharisees were professing Jews, and yet, said the Apostle, "they are not all Israel which are of Israel.' They were literally the children of Abraham, and they made great boasting of their descent; yet Christ told them plainly that, because they resisted the force of truth and opposed His pure doctrines and refused to be reformed, they were truly the children of the Devil. So they are not all of Christ who bear and boast of the Name of Christ; but many of them may without inconsistency be regarded as those persons who have not the seal of God on their foreheads.[2]

These men, then, are the objects of this fearful judgment, these are the persons who are tormented by the scorpion sting of the Locusts, by the infidel authors and malicious offspring of the Great Revolution. It is upon the professing Christians, the hypocrites and the sinners of Christendom, that these Scorpions eject their venom, and especially upon those Rulers in Church and State who

[1] "Quinta (designat) majorem hæreticorum infestationem, tempus Antichristi præcurrentium. . . . Prænuntia magnæ fornacis . . . hæretica fervet insania."—Bede, *in loc.*

[2] Clemens Romanus speaks of the wicked as those who have not preserved their seal, meaning the seal of their baptism: "*τῶν γὰρ μὴ τηρησάντων τὴν σφραγῖδα.*"—*Epist.* ii. c. vii.

support corrupt systems of Christianity and refuse to hear the voice of truth.

The malicious infidel may assail indeed the servant of God. But he is sealed upon his forehead and armed in mail of proof. "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy : and nothing shall by any means hurt you."[1] And such true servants of God are not to be found in this or that out of the many communions into which the Church is divided. They are not exclusively Greek or Latin, Papists or Protestants. The Apocalypse was not given to be a party text-book or the armoury of theological discussion, but to console the righteous and warn the wicked, and especially the former, as the time of the end draws near, and the powers of evil seem to be gaining ground.

These Scorpion Locusts, then, have no power over the Righteous to torment them with the venom of their falsehood or the violence of their malice, for "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." But their lion's teeth lay waste that vine and bark that fig-tree which is not rooted in the love of Christ, and in the faith of His Revealed Word.

It is not necessary, and probably is not intended, to confine these Locusts to any particular set of men. They refer doubtless to all those agents of the Evil One who, in the intellectual world, busy themselves in the propagation of infidel notions, or, in the world political, attempt the overthrow of lawful authority or the destruction of human society. Literal locusts are not only numerous but also of many kinds, and we have too good reason to know, in these days, how many in number and how various in kind are the agents of Satan in Christendom. The Great Revolution let loose upon us Devouring Locusts and Tormenting

[1] St. Luke x. 19.

Scorpions, and it is amongst these that the servant of Christ treads his cautious way. There are Locusts who destroy the truth by the propagation of falsehood; there are Scorpions who torment by malice and violence. Unstable souls are harassed by the former, and the latter, from time to time, have been permitted, and probably will be permitted again, to hurl kings from their thrones, to abolish the institutions of centuries, and to turn society upside down. These are, indeed, the torment of Christendom, executing upon it a righteous judgment for its corruption and neglect of Christianity, and especially for its obstinate persistence in that corruption.

Two other points remain to be considered: the Time during which the Locusts torment men, and the Destroying King who is set over them. It is twice said that the power of the Locusts to torment men should continue five months. So far as the imagery of the vision is concerned this is quite natural. For the devastations of the literal locusts never continue much longer. The expression may therefore have been added merely to complete the picture. If it has any further meaning, which is most probable, it will imply that the Plague of Locusts will last for the period symbolically intimated by five months; which, according to the year-day system of prophecy, represents 150 years. When the Ages of Revolution have run out, some future expositor of prophecy will doubtless be led to examine this point and to discover the right application of the symbol.

As regards the King of the Locusts, the Angel of the bottomless pit, the Destroyer who becomes the Leader of those instruments of Satan who rise up when the Providential restraints of the wicked are withdrawn; if only one man is meant, there can be little doubt that Napoleon I. was that man. But it seems far more probable that this symbol will have to be applied to many other Destroyers of the same

kind, who will rise from time to time to the surface amidst the revolutionary convulsions of Christendom. Time only will show whether one or more than one King of the Locusts will rise up to be the scourge of Christian nations.[1]

[1] If the ascription of the parts of other animals to the locust in this passage is not due merely to poetic description, but is intended, according to Oriental custom, to suggest the things signified by the signifying symbol; if, that is, we ought to assign a definite meaning to each detail in the description of the locust, then it will not be difficult to explain and account for each detail in the picture. Thus the scorpion's sting will intimate their malice; the golden crown, their victories; the human faces, the fact that they are men; the female hair, their effeminacy; the breastplates of iron, their power of resistance; and the lion's teeth, their ferocity and destructive violence. "In capillis mulierum," says Bede, "fluxos et effeminatos mores (designat)."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEATH OF THE WITNESSES

When the prophet has finished his description of the vision seen on the sounding of the Fifth Trumpet, he is told that One Woe is over, and that two more are to follow. "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." [1] The last three judgments which fall upon the earth are more terrible than any which have preceded them. They are emphatically called Woes. If the interpretation of the previous vision is correct, the reader will observe that the First of these Woes has not yet passed away. At the end of the last and beginning of the present century, God withdrew in great measure those Providential restraints by which the madness of the people is commonly reined in. To punish Christendom for its treatment of Christianity, He permitted the agents of Satan to bring about the French Revolution; and He still permits them to prepare the way for future, more general, and more destructive revolutions. This series of Judicial Revolutions is probably the fulfilment of the vision of the Fifth Trumpet, called by the Angel the First Woe. When this cycle of convulsions shall have come to an end, then we are led to expect the Second Woe, some judgment still more terrible, still more universal, but of a different

[1] Rev. ix. 12.

character from any which the world has yet seen. Let us consider of what character it is likely to be.

There is every reason to believe, not only from prophecy, but also from the examples of past history, that the democratic convulsions of these times will bring about the natural result of such disturbances, the extinction of liberty by crushing military despotism. Society cannot exist without government. And the more enlightened the masses of the people become, the more difficult it becomes to persuade them to submit to government. What is in these days called free or constitutional government is indeed an inestimable blessing, but one which rarely falls to the lot of any nation. It can exist only under the most favourable and unusual circumstances, and amongst a people deeply imbued with a reverence for law both human and Divine, and gradually trained to the use of liberty. It falls to pieces the instant liberty is abused.

The revolutions of our own age are the result of misused light and liberty. Christianity alone can teach the masses of the people the right use of increasing knowledge, and the prudent exercise and just limits of freedom. Now, what reason have we to believe that the masses of the people throughout Christendom are becoming more imbued with the genuine motives and principles of the Gospel? And if this be not the case, what reason have we to expect that they will learn to use their light and liberty with more discretion and self-denial?

It is, therefore, politically probable that the people of Christendom will not learn to apply their knowledge and love of freedom to a better purpose; and therefore that further and more general revolutions are to be expected, until society has, so to speak, righted itself; until the great pool which is now fermenting has settled down, and sent its scum to the surface, and its dregs to the bottom;

until the liberties of the masses are annihilated, and overwhelming despotism again subdues the nations.

As this state of things is politically probable, so the visions of prophecy seem to foreshadow, in a very general way, the same result. There is every reason to believe that the judgment immediately preceding the Lord's Advent will be executed by Despotic Princes, hostile to the Religion of Christ, and persecuting His people. As at the beginning of her history the powers of the world were opposed to the Church, so it will be in the end. Satan will be allowed to make a last effort. He will accomplish that deception of the nations which he is now attempting. He will bring about the Open Apostasy of the Ruling Powers, and when the night of evil is darkest the Sun of Righteousness will rise upon the world, the Seventh Angel will sound the Trumpet of Judgment, and there will be great voices in heaven, proclaiming, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." [1]

When the Sixth Angel has sounded his Trumpet the Second Woe begins to take effect. The Angel is commanded to set free Four Instruments of the Wrath of God, prepared, on a fixed year, month, day, and even hour, to slay the third part of the inhabitants of the earth. Until the appointed hour has arrived these instruments of vengeance are bound [2] by Providential restraints upon the banks of the river Euphrates.[3] We may learn why they are thus restrained by referring to the 7th chapter. Four

[1] Rev. xi. 15.

[2] "Quid autem putas soluti facient, qui tantum nunc nocent ligati?" —Bede, *in loc.*

[3] "Euphrates, qui fluvius est Babyloniæ, mundani regni potentiam . . . indicat."—Bede, *in loc.*

Angels are there described as holding the destroying winds of the earth until the servants of God have been sealed on their foreheads; that is to say, until the faithful are sufficiently prepared to meet with safety the coming storm, and to be kept "from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." [1]

It is impossible to conjecture whom these four destroying angels in the Allegory may represent in the future actual history of the world, because they have as yet, so far as we know, no existence except in the inscrutable counsels of the Almighty. But taken in connection with other visions they seem to foreshadow four warlike nations,[2] first fighting one with another, and then conspiring against the Religion and Servants of Jesus Christ.[3] It is difficult to show the probability of this conjecture, or to suggest any explanation of the other symbols of this vision, until other scenes in the sacred drama connected with it have been examined.

The description of this vision continues to the end of the 9th chapter. Then, before the Seventh Angel sounds his Trumpet, and before the vision of the Sixth Trumpet is finished, a fresh set of images comes upon the stage, an episode in the Allegory takes place, a parenthetical vision is presented to the Seer's view. Precisely the same thing occurred before in the 7th chapter, after the opening of the Sixth Seal and before the opening of the

[1] Rev. iii. 10.

[2] "Per angulos terræ, sive quatuor ventos trans Euphratem fluvium, gentes sunt quatuor."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

"Quatuor regna principalia."—Bede, *in loc.*

[3] "Sexta (designat) apertum Antichristi et suorum contra Ecclesiam bellum, et recapitulatione ab adventu Domini, intersertam ejusdem adversarii destructionem."—Bede, *in loc.*

Seventh. Under the image of an earthquake and fearful signs in heaven, the most unprecedented convulsions and distress of nations were foreshadowed. The inhabitants of the earth are all in fear and trembling, but what is the condition of the saints? Nothing is said about them in the vision of the Sixth Seal; they are not there distinguished from the panic-stricken dwellers upon the earth. Accordingly, before the Seventh Seal is broken, a parenthetical vision is introduced for their special consolation and encouragement. The same thing happens here. In the vision of the Sixth Trumpet nothing whatever is said about the Church up to the end of the 9th chapter. The parenthetical vision of the 10th and 11th chapters shows us her connection with that great catastrophe.[1]

Of these two chapters, the 11th contains the prophetic vision, the 10th is merely introductory. St. John sees a Mighty Angel descend from heaven holding a little book open in his hand; that is to say, bringing to the prophet a new and intelligible disclosure of future things. The Apostle is commanded to take this book and to eat it, and when he does so, he finds it sweet indeed in his mouth, but bitter as soon as he has swallowed it. The same symbolical action is recorded among the earlier visions of Ezekiel. "And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein, and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel."[2]

[1] "Descripta Antichristi sævitia, ad ostendendam ejusdem ruinam more suo exordium nativitatis Christi et gloriam recapitulat Eccleſiæ." —Bede, *in loc.*

[2] Ezek. ii. 9, 10; iii. 1–3.

This symbolical action speaks for itself. The prophet is commanded to make further disclosures of the will of God. He is to take God's Word into his inmost parts, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it; and then he is to continue his prophecy. Ezekiel is told, after he has eaten the roll, to "go and speak unto the house of Israel." And the Apostle receives a like command; "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

To both of the prophets it is pleasant to receive any message from the Lord; His Word is sweet, yea, sweeter than honey unto their mouth. But after meditating upon them they find the tidings they have to deliver very bitter to their souls; it pities them to behold the sorrows of Jerusalem, and they are horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake God's law.

The voices of Seven Thunders make some disclosures, in this prefatory vision, which seem to have been intended solely for the consolation of the prophet, for he is commanded not to record what they say.

With the 11th chapter the directly prophetic part of this parenthetical vision begins. A measuring rod is given to the Seer and he is commanded to "rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."[1] But of the outer court or court of the Gentiles it is said: "The court which is without the temple leave out and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles."

Now nothing is more common in Scripture than the figure here used, by which the Building sacred to God is made the symbol of His people. Speaking of Christians, St. Paul says, "Ye are the temple of the living God."[2] "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens

[1] Rev. xi. 1. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 16.

with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." [1] "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." [2] And in the earlier visions of the Apocalypse we read, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." [3] We must not therefore imagine that any literal buildings are here meant by the Temple, Altar, Court, or even by the Holy City mentioned immediately after.[4]

In the vision St. John saw, no doubt, a likeness of the literal city, court, and temple, but these buildings are allegorical symbols of the Church of Christ. There are here, as it were, three concentric circles, jointly embracing the whole visible Church in its widest acceptation. There are the Temple and Altar first, then the Outer Court, and lastly the Whole City which bears the name of Holy. And, of these three divisions of the Church, the first and smallest is measured; the second is not measured for a specified reason, namely, "Because it is given to the Gentiles;" and the third is trodden underfoot by the Gentiles for a specified time.

What, then, is the meaning of this distinction?

The parallel passages, the 7th and 14th chapters, which relate, like the Temple-vision, to the condition of the saints when the judgments of God are on the earth, will fix the meaning of this act of measuring.

The 7th chapter, or vision of sealing, comes between the Sixth and Seventh Seals, just as this Temple-vision is

[1] Ephes. ii. 19–21. [2] Heb. xiii. 10. [3] Rev. iii. 12.

[4] "Qui per templum Dei, nisi fideles designantur? . . . . Ipsa quippe designatur per civitatem quæ et per templum."—*Ambrosius in Apoc.* lib. v.

inserted between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets. And in both of these visions a distinction is made between two kinds of saints, the remnant of the seed of Israel, and the saved from amongst the Gentiles. In the 7th chapter the former of these are numbered with the greatest exactness. The number of each tribe, and of all taken together, is mentioned. "I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." [1] But of the Gentile saints it is as distinctly said that no man could number them. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb." [2]

Again, in the 14th chapter, where there is a vision recorded of the felicity of the saints, the same distinction is implied between the early Jewish and later Gentile Christians. The Apostle beholds again "a Lamb standing on Mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." [3] These persons are then described as being "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb:" that is to say, the saints of the Jewish nation, probably before as well as after Christ, who were redeemed by the Blood of Jesus. Then follows a vision intimating the universality of the Gospel, when published to the Gentiles. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." [4]

These parallel passages, illustrating as they do the historical fact, that the Covenant was not only first made with the chosen nation, but also for some years after Christ con-

[1] Rev. vii. 4. [2] Rev. vii. 9.
[3] Rev. xiv. 1. [4] Rev. xiv. 6.

fined to Abraham's seed, throw great light on the symbolical act of measuring the Temple but omitting to measure the Court of the Gentiles, mentioned in this 11th chapter. "The angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without [outside] the temple leave out and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread underfoot forty and two months." [1]

Here, then, we have the whole visible Church represented by the common and natural symbol of the chosen City of God, that Jerusalem which was called the Holy City even when the sins of its inhabitants had called down upon it the severest judgments of Heaven.

The Holy City stands here for the Whole Church, in the widest acceptation of that word, being co-extensive with that which, after the establishment of Christianity amongst the nations, we understand by the name Christendom.

But in the vision the buildings consecrated to God are divided into three portions: the Temple with its Altar, the Outer Court of the Temple, and then the Whole City which contains these. And in the Church there are the same divisions: the remnant of Israel, the saved of the Gentiles, and the great mass of professing Christians, who, by their hypocritical profession and ungodly lives, defile the Church of God, or, in the language of the vision, "tread underfoot the holy city." The Temple, with its Altar and worshippers, that is to say, the faithful remnant of Israel, the Apostle is commanded to measure; just as in the 7th and 14th chapters the sealed "of all the tribes of the children of Israel," "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb," are numbered at "an hundred and forty and four thousand;" not meaning, probably, exactly that number, but some

[1] Rev. xi. 1, 2.

limited number. Then, secondly, the Apostle is forbidden to measure the Court outside the Temple, because that part of the Sacred Building had been given to the Gentiles, to whose place of worship no limits are to be set, whose number should seem infinite; just as, in the 7th chapter, after hearing the number of the Israelites, the Apostle beholds "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues," standing "before the throne and before the Lamb." [1]

And, thirdly, the Holy City itself, that is to say, all that part of it which is outside not only the Temple but also the Court of the Gentile worshippers, is to be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles. Now, as treading underfoot implies defiling that which is so trodden down, we must understand this symbolical action to denote that the Church of God will be in the possession of the Gentiles, and will be defiled by them, by their evil lives, and by their oppression of all those who truly worship God and bear witness against their errors in doctrine and morals.[2] It is said that this state of oppression will continue "forty-two months." The time when it will commence is not mentioned, but only the period of its continuance. The vision, therefore, foreshows that the Christian Church will be in the power of those who defile and oppress her forty-two months, a symbolical period, which, as I hope to prove hereafter, probably signifies 1,260 years.

This interpretation is confirmed by what follows. It is evident that the pollution of the Church and the oppression of the faithful is intended by the treading underfoot of the

[1] "Potest et sic intelligi, quod enumeratis tribubus Israel, quibus evangelium primo prædicatum est, salvationem quoque velit commemorare gentium."—Bede, vii. 370.

[2] "Hoc est, hujus mundi hominibus, ut a gentibus vel cum gentibus conculcetur."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

Holy City, because immediately afterwards we are told that during the same period the Witnesses of God shall bear their testimony in sorrow, "clothed in sackcloth." "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." [1]

Who, then, are these witnesses? In the next verse they are compared to Olive Trees and Candlesticks. That is to say, in plainer language, they are themselves the light-giving portion of the Church, and they also supply the oil which feeds the light of the Church. "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." [2] The emblem is used by Zechariah for those persons who were anointed for the holy office of restoring the fallen temple of Jerusalem. The prophet asks these questions: "What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?" "What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" And the answer is given in plain words, "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." [3] That is to say, as the answer is commonly explained, the Lord's anointed servants Joshua and Zerubbabel, "who, having finished the temple, like olive trees, feed the flame of piety with oil, and stand by the Lord, constantly attending upon His service, in the Jewish ecclesiastical and civil polity represented by the candlestick." [4] It is evident, therefore, that these Two Witnesses must be the symbols of those persons whom, from time to time, the Lord anoints with the Oil of His Spirit, that they may strive to repair the falling Temple of the Christian Church; those holy men who mourn over the corruptions

[1] Rev. xi. 3.
Zech. iv. 11, 12, 14.

[2] Rev. xi. 4.

[4] Holden's *Christ. Expos.*

of the Church, and by the light of their preaching, and by the bright example of their holy lives, bear a testimony against it. Whilst the Holy City is being trodden underfoot, whilst the Church is being corrupted and oppressed, the faithful few are in sorrow, represented by sackcloth, the external garb of sorrow ; and in every possible manner they raise their voices against the corruptions of their times. They are themselves a part of the Church. Indeed, they are the only truly living members of the Church, and therefore they are compared to Candlesticks, according to the use of this symbol in the earlier visions of the Apocalypse ; "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."[1] They are spoken of as Two Candlesticks, probably because in the days of their prophecy the Church is divided into two great portions, the Eastern and Western branches.[2] But not only are they the most true and living representatives of these two branches of the Church ; they are also the holy sources of light and strength to them. They are the Lights of the Churches, therefore they are compared to Candlesticks or Lamps ; and they also keep alive the light of truth and piety in others, therefore they are compared also to Olive Trees whence the oil is derived which feeds the flame of the lamps.

Moreover, their character is more clearly pointed out by the symbolical actions attributed to them. Power is given them to work miracles. From this we are not to conclude that the Divine Author of the Apocalypse wished us to understand that His faithful Witnesses, in every age, should be possessed of miraculous powers. These miracles are mentioned to remind us of the Two Great Witnesses to God's ancient people, Moses and Elijah. Like Elijah, they

[1] Rev. i. 20.

[2] Or, as another suggests, "Ecclesia duobus populis unita."—Bede, *in loc.*

call down fire by their prayers to destroy those who seek to injure them, and they shut up heaven that it may not rain: and, like Moses, they turn water into blood and smite the earth with all plagues. These symbolical actions, therefore, teach us two things respecting these Witnesses. First, that they shall be men faithful and uncompromising like Moses and Elijah; and secondly, that like those ancient prophets they shall be mightily defended in all their trials. Their prayers shall be heard on high, and shall call down the Vials of Judgment from the Almighty; and during the 1,260 years, the appointed period of their prophecy, the power of all their enemies shall not be able to destroy them or to silence the voice of their testimony.[1]

A very fearful event, however, is dimly foreshadowed by the remainder of this prophetic vision. There is a time yet future when the Voice of God's Witnesses shall be silenced; when, as of old, their blood shall be shed like water on every side of Jerusalem; when those indignities so powerfully described by the Psalmist shall be heaped upon the faithful disciples of Jesus. "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance: thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem an heap of stones. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the air: and the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the land. Their blood have they shed like water on every side of Jerusalem: and there was no man to bury them. We are become an open shame to our enemies: a very scorn and derision unto them that are round about us."[2] This figurative passage of ancient Scripture, applied by Bishop Horne to "the sufferings and humiliation of the Church," and to "the scorn and derision of infidels, who

[1] "Potestatem verbi dicit," says Victorinus, speaking of the fire proceeding from the mouths of the witnesses.

[2] Psalm lxxix. 1-4.

fail not at such seasons to reproach her and blaspheme her God," forms the best commentary upon the next portion of this vision. "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also Our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another: because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."[1]

When the 1,260 years have come to an end, the appointed period during which the Church is defiled and oppressed by ungodly rulers, and during which also the faithful few mourn over her corruptions and bear a fearless testimony against them; when this time is over, the Beast, who represents in every age, as we shall see by-and-by, the Ruling Power in the World, will no longer only defile the Christian name by professing it, will no longer only oppress the Church by ruling it on worldly principles, will no longer be the wolf in sheep's clothing; but will throw off all disguise and declare himself the open enemy of Christ's Witnesses. Moreover, he will to all appearance succeed in his fell purpose. It will be given unto him not only "to make war with the Saints," but also "to overcome them."[2] He will to all appearance put out the Light of the Church; and for a very brief space, probably, according to the most ancient and universal tradition, for three years and a half, he will silence the fearless voice of the Martyrs of the Latter Days.

[1] Rev. xi. 7–10. [2] Rev. xiii. 7.

Whatever may be the nature of these events, we know from the rest of the vision that they will happen just before the resurrection of the dead and the Day of Judgment, for it is then written: "And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four-and-twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."[1]

As both the Death and the Resurrection of the Witnesses are events evidently still future, it is idle to make any other than the most general conjectures respecting them. The general meaning of the vision is plain enough; and, while it gives us a truly awful view of the future trials of the Church, consoles us by the most certain assurance of her

[1] Rev. xi. 11–18.

sudden and signal deliverance out of the power of her Last and Worst Oppressor. This Oppressor is here called by anticipation "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," a symbol which the prophecies of Daniel as well as the latter visions of the Apocalypse show to mean the Mighty Ruler, and here the Last Mighty Ruler of the Powers of this World.

We learn something also, in a general way, of the place where these last great events will happen. It will be in Jerusalem, "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." The City in which Our Lord was crucified must mean Jerusalem, in the Allegory; just as, in the beginning of this same scene of the Drama, it was the Temple, and Altar, and Outer Court, and Holy City which St. John saw. But we are not to infer that because it means Jerusalem in the Allegory, it therefore means that small and unimportant city of Judæa, in the last period of the world's history allegorised in this vision. As well might we infer that the glorious dwelling-place of the risen Saints, described at the end of the Apocalypse, will be the ancient capital of the Jewish people in the land of Canaan.

As the Holy City, at the commencement of the vision trodden underfoot by the Gentiles, meant the visible Church oppressed by the powers of the world, or what we commonly call Christendom; so here the Great City, called Sodom and Egypt by reason of her apostasy, means the same Christendom Unchristianised, if we may be allowed such an expression. The Jerusalem of the Allegory stands here in this 8th verse for Christendom Unchristianised, or those nations which have for centuries borne the Christian name, and which, for aught we know to the contrary, will probably do so even to the end, even after they have quite apostatised from the true and living principles of Christ, and have slain

His Faithful Witnesses. The city in the Allegory is still declared to be Jerusalem, for it is called the "great city where our Lord was crucified." If, therefore, Jerusalem stands for the visible Church in the beginning of the vision, it must do so throughout. By the visible Church is, of course, meant all those persons or nations who in the world bear the Christian name. Just as the name Israel stood formerly for all the seed of Jacob, good and bad, as well for those who were, in a living sense, "of Israel," as for those who were not.

But what a change has taken place in the description of this City in the Allegory! Whilst it is only "trodden underfoot" by the Gentiles, and has still some light in it, in consequence of the bright shining of the Lamps of God's Faithful Witnesses, it is called "the holy city." But when the Witnesses are silenced and slain, and only their dead bodies remain in the City; when all the lights of the City are for a time extinguished and the hour of her darkness [1] has come; she is no longer called the Holy City, but designated by the most opprobrious names, "Sodom" and "Egypt," and "the great city . . . where also our Lord was crucified;" opprobrious names indeed, but full of meaning, denoting the apostasy of the City from her God.

She is, "spiritually," that is to say figuratively, called Sodom and Egypt. The meaning of these appellations is fixed by their use in the visions of the ancient prophets. Speaking of Jerusalem, concerning which he says, "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers;" the prophet Isaiah writes, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of

[1] St. Luke xxii. 53: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Gomorrah."[1] Heathen lineage also is assigned to Jerusalem by Ezekiel, in order to express by a powerful figure her utter apostasy from Jehovah: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter . . . your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite . . . and thy younger sister . . . is Sodom and her daughters."[2]

The possibility, indeed, of such a state of things, the possibility of an apostate Christendom still bearing the name of Christ, and, it may be, boasting of it, is rendered certain by the notorious historical fact that such a state of things has existed before. Jerusalem and the Jewish people, in Our Lord's day, were a fearful example of it. They called themselves God's chosen people, they despised all who bore not the name of Israel, they boasted that they were the sons of Abraham; but whose children did Our Saviour call them, and how did they treat the Witnesses of Our Lord? "They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning."[3]

[1] Isaiah i. 10, 21.

[2] Ezek. xvi. 2, 3, 44–46. "Esaias . . . cum Israel disputans, principes Sodomorum et populum Gomorrhæ dicebat eos: similem Sodomitis transgressionem, et eadem, quæ illis fuerunt, peccata esse apud eos significans."—Irenæus, i. 710.

[3] St. John viii. 39–44.

Even so, in the latter days, these Christian murderers of Christians; this Christendom, in whose streets the dead bodies of Christ's Witnesses shall be exposed and insulted, will still, in all probability, bear and boast of the Name of Christ, but will be, in truth, the kingdom of the long-predicted Antichrist; the historical antitype of "that great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also Our Lord was crucified;" where the Son of God, in the person of His Holy Martyrs, will be crucified afresh and put to an open shame.

Although these great events are foreshadowed dimly, and only in the most general terms, there can be no question that there remains for the Church of the future a time of most fearful trial. Time only will show the character of this trial. The Death of the Witnesses may not be caused by open persecution, which has generally had the effect of stimulating the zeal of Christians, but by the more deadly influence of a cold and contemptuous indifference to the cause of Christianity on the part of the Rulers of the World. In this case there will be a terrible meaning in the words, they "shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves." For they will imply that the dead forms of churches will remain after all the light has been extinguished in them; and that the Rulers of Christendom will not allow the names and forms of Christianity to be given up, when their consciences are no longer tormented by the preaching of those who bear them. The state of the world, in any case, will be far from sorrowful. "They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another: because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."[1]

Awful words these; showing us the vast gulf that

[1] Rev. xi. 10.

divides the sorrows as well as the joys of the World from those of the Church ; reminding us of that solemn saying, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice ;" but in the sequel reminding us also of the rest of that saying, "and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."[1] For, in the Allegory, the bodies of the witnesses do not lie dead many days ; the dwellers upon the earth have but a short triumph over those cold and lifeless tongues, now so silent, but once so fearless, so tormenting to their evil consciences. "After three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet ; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud ; and their enemies beheld them."[2] And in the fulfilment of the Allegory, in whatever manner, whether literally or figuratively, that fulfilment shall take place, we may be sure that the hour of the wicked and the triumph of darkness will be but of short continuance. For we know from other Scriptures that, just at that time when Satan seems to have gained the day, Christ Jesus will snatch the palm of victory out of his hand. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."[3] In the figurative language of this vision, there shall be in the same hour a great earthquake which shall destroy seven thousand men, and cause the affrighted remnant to give glory to the God of heaven. And this catastrophe closes the Great Judgment of the Sixth Trumpet, and is the end of the Second Woe ; "The second woe is past; behold the third woe cometh quickly."[4] And then the Trumpet of Final Judgment sounds,

[1] St. John xvi. 20.
[2] Rev. xi. 11.
[3] 1 Thess. v. 3.
[4] Rev. xi. 14.

announcing that "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ . . . that the time of the dead is come that they should be judged, that God should give reward unto his servants the prophets, and to the saints and them that fear his name, small and great, and that he should destroy those that destroy the earth."[1]

[1] Rev. xi. 15–18.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH AND HER ENEMY

WITH the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse we find ourselves again evidently at the very commencement of the Christian Dispensation. A fresh set of images is made to pass before the eyes or before the imagination of the Seer, images which cannot possibly relate to any other than the earliest period of Gospel history. By the visions of the 11th and preceding chapters we were brought down to the very end, to the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. A fresh series of visions now commences, allegorising more in detail the Warfare of the Great Hero of the Drama, the Rider on the White Horse; representing, under symbols, the struggles of Christianity with the world until that great Conqueror appears again upon the stage, followed by the armies of His saints, and triumphing over sin and death and all the powers of this world.

But, although throughout this book the scene changes so often, although so many and such different images appear upon the stage, there is one set of symbols, there is one grand picture, constantly before the eyes of the prophet, at least from the beginning of the 4th to the end of the 19th chapter. This picture is the vision of the Throne, of the Four Cherubic Forms, the Four-and twenty Elders, and the Seven Lamps of fire, described in the 4th chapter. We know that this picture remained before the prophet's

eyes, because its symbols are from time to time spoken of as present, and as being, as it were, spectators with him of the other scenes which are introduced. It is possible, indeed, that all the images may have remained after having been once introduced; though it is far more probable that they passed by and made room for others, when the Apostle had finished his description of them. But of the vision described in the 4th chapter, we may be certain that its imagery was permanent, at any rate up to the end of the 19th chapter. And this is a very important point to observe. For it not only gives us a more exact idea of what St. John saw, and a clearer comprehension of the arrangement of the visions, but it also gives a remarkable unity to the whole series of visions from the 4th to the 19th chapter. They relate to one subject, and one only, the only subject indeed worthy of being made the subject of Christian prophecy: the Warfare of the Rider on the White Horse, the Warfare of the Lamb, the struggles of Christ and His religion with the World.

The original scenery, then, of the Throne, and the Four Living Creatures, and the Four-and-twenty Elders remaining permanent, and the visions of the Seals and the Trumpets having been described, another set of images is now introduced, to illustrate still further and more in detail the Warfare of the Hero of the Allegory.

"There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red serpent, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the serpent stood before the woman

which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."[1]

No new or unusual images are introduced in this vision, but only such as are to be found in other Scriptures. In the first place, the Coming of Christ to destroy Satan is spoken of, in the very beginning of the Bible, and immediately after the Fall of Man, in a somewhat similar manner and under images which illustrate this passage. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."[2] Here, then, we have a definite meaning assigned to the principal Actors in this Allegory: the Woman from whom Christ should be born, Christ Himself her Seed, and Satan His enemy.

In the second place, we find that the ancient prophets in like manner illustrate the other details of the vision. That chosen people of God, selected specially to be the nation from which Christ should be born, that ancient Church of God which is one and the same with the Church of the redeemed in all ages, is frequently represented under the symbol of a Woman, "the daughter of Zion," and the Mother of the saints. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee,"[3] writes Zechariah of the ancient Church; and of the Christian Church, the spiritual Jerusalem, St. Paul says, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."[4]

Both the Jewish and the Christian Churches are also represented under the emblem of women bearing children. The Jewish Church, from having been first in covenant with God, is spoken of as one that "hath an husband;"

[1] Rev. xii. 1–5. [2] Gen. iii. 15. [3] Zech. ii. 10. [4] Gal. iv. 26.

and it was predicted of the Gentile Church, formerly childless, that she should have many children. "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."[1] The sudden rise and increase of the Christian Church is compared to a woman bringing forth before her pains come upon her.[2] "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child."[3] The prophet here uses the same image as that in the Allegory under consideration; but he uses it in a different manner, having a different object in view, wishing to express the suddenness of the coming of a Redeemer, and His being sent without any effort on the part of those He came to deliver.

The following words of Micah are more exactly to the point. Having shown that Christ should be born in the town of Bethlehem, in words quoted by the Jews to Herod when he sent to inquire where Christ should be born, he immediately adds, in allusion to that event, "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel."[4]

St. Paul expresses, by a like figure, the universal desire of fallen humanity for the appearance of a Saviour, and for deliverance "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know," he writes, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."[5]

Moreover, in the Allegory, the Church, the chosen nation, those representatives of fallen human nature specially selected to be the literal ancestors of the Messiah's

[1] Gal. iv. 27. [2] Holden, *Christ. Expos.* [3] Isaiah lxvi. 7.
[4] Micah v. 3. [5] Rom. viii. 21–23.

Humanity and His introducers into the world, are exhibited not only under the symbol of a Woman in travail, but also of a Woman "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." These signs are added either solely in allusion to the sources of that nation from which Christ was born, Jacob and his twelve sons, represented in the dream of Joseph by the sun, moon, and stars;[1] or, as the passage is more commonly understood, because the Church in all ages is protected and enlightened by God, who is "the sun and the shield"[2] of His people; because it was derived of old from the Twelve Patriarchs, and afterwards enlightened by the Twelve Apostles; and because it has ever the affairs of this world beneath its feet, represented by the moon, the emblem of changeableness and uncertainty.[3]

When God was about to bring deliverance to His people, when Christ was about to be born of the chosen nation, now in a state of great humiliation and under the power of their heathen enemies, Satan was not idle; he prepared, from the first tidings of this event, to accomplish His destruction. It is always when things are come to the worst, when faith has been tried to the utmost, when all human aid is powerless, that the Arm of Jehovah brings deliverance. And so it was when Christ was born. Nothing could have been more hopeless than the condition of the Jewish people. The sceptre was finally departing from Judah. There was still a king nominally a Jew. But he had been set over the Jews by their Roman conquerors. In a very short time

[1] Gen. xxxvii. 9, 10. [2] Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

[3] "Mulier amicta sole. . . . Antiqua Ecclesia est Patrum et Prophetarum, et Sanctorum et Apostolorum; quæ gemitus et tormenta desiderii sui habuit usquequo fructum ex plebe sua secundum carnem olim promissum sibi videret Christum ex ipsa gente corpus sumsisse."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

they were to be reduced to the form of a Roman province, to be under a Roman governor, ruled by Roman soldiers; and finally to be destroyed by the Roman armies and scattered over the face of the earth. This was indeed the time of Jacob's trouble; the travail pains of the daughter of Zion had come upon her. Yet the faith of the Jews was strong. They had deeply studied the word of promise; and, though they did not comprehend the spiritual nature of that promise, they believed it was on the eve of being fulfilled.[1] The Daughter of Judah was in sorrow and hope. In the language of the Allegory, "she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

But when the long predicted "seed of the woman" is about to appear to "bruise the serpent's head," the Serpent himself prepares to "bruise his heel." Before Christ is born Satan prepares the instruments of His destruction. In the wisdom of God he is allowed great power in the world, especially at this time. His mightiest instrument is the Roman Empire. By means of this he is able to bring over to his purpose all the rulers of the powers of this world. First, he has Herod, ready to seek the life of Him who was born King of the Jews. Then he has the Scribes and Pharisees ready to demand, and the cowardly Roman governor to execute, the extremity of his cruel malice, the crucifixion of the Son of Man.

These historical facts, therefore, are next allegorised by the following symbols. St. John sees a Great Red Serpent, the emblem of Satan, waiting to devour the Woman's Child as soon as it should be born.[2] This Serpent is identified with the ruling power in the world, the Roman Empire, by his Seven Heads and Ten Horns and Seven Crowns upon

[1] St. Matt. ii. 1–6.

[2] "Diabolus . . . . contra Ecclesiam potentia terreni regni armatur."—Bede, *in loc.*

his Heads.[1] For the God-opposing power of the world had been, in the visions of Daniel, represented as a Beast with Ten Horns, and will be several times so represented in the subsequent visions of the Apocalypse, with the addition of Seven Heads.[2] His success also in bringing about the apostasy of the Jewish rulers and gaining them over to his will is fitly represented by his drawing with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven and casting them to the earth. Or this symbolical act may denote the subjection of all other powers to the power of Rome,[3] and their preparation to fulfil the purposes of Satan, in attempting to destroy, first the Lord of Life, and then His Infant Church.

But the Allegory, faithfully symbolising the great truths of history, goes on to show how futile were the malicious efforts of the Evil One. Just when he seemed to have gained his end, when the Shepherd had been smitten and the sheep scattered abroad, then it was that he had given the crown of victory to the Messiah, then it was that in bruising the Messiah's heel he had himself received the death-stroke on his own head. God would not leave the soul of His Only Begotten in hell, neither would He suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Christ rose from the grave on the third day, and, when He had visited and strengthened His little flock, "was caught up to God, and to his throne." "She brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."[4] Then began to be fulfilled the promise of the Lord by the mouth of David, "Thou art my son; this day have I be-

[1] "Septem capita . . . id est, civitas Romana."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

[2] Dan. vii. 7. [3] See Dan. viii. 10. [4] Rev. xii. 5.

"Raptum ad solium Dei et nos legimus in Actis Apostolorum, quemadmodum loquens cum discipuils raptus est in cælos."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

gotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." [1]

The first division, the first scene of this Act of the Allegory, is now brought to a close by the following words : "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." [2] As of old in the days of Moses, the Church of God, though she has been called out of Egypt, may not enter the promised land until she has passed through the trials of the wilderness.[3] Although Christ is gone into heaven, His servants may not, until the resurrection of the body, enter that blessed place. "The remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," [4] and "the Woman" herself, that is to say the whole Church of Christ, whether Jewish or Gentile (the distinction between the two having now been destroyed), is left in the wilderness of this world to perform her weary pilgrimage.[5] This 6th verse, however, contains a brief statement, inserted here for the sake of clearness, but developed more fully in the 14th and three following verses. We are here told that the Woman flees into the wilderness to a position which the Providence of God has designed for her, and that when she has reached that position she is to be supported there for a thousand two hundred and

[1] Psalm ii. 7–9. [2] Rev. xii. 6.

[3] "Universa enim quæ ex Ægypto profectio fiebat populi a Deo, typus et imago fuit profectionis Ecclesiæ, quæ erat futura ex gentibus." —Irenæus, i. 661.

[4] Rev. xii. 17.

[5] "Ecclesia, sub spe vivens æternorum, peregrinatione præsentis eremi gaudet."—Bede, *in loc.*

threescore days. Then a little episode is introduced to show what the Serpent would be doing in the interval, or rather to symbolise Satan's efforts to accomplish the destruction of Christ and His Primitive Church.

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath a short time."[1]

In studying this vision, it is most important to remember the Allegorical nature of the Apocalypse. We have here, as in the majority of the visions, a most perfect Allegory. Every historical fact is represented by symbolism, but there is that frequent interpenetration of the symbol and the thing symbolised which is characteristic of the Allegory, and which helps us to arrive at its meaning.

First of all there is a great battle. "There was war in heaven." But in whatever manner this battle may have been fought by the symbolic agents; with whatever weapons St. John may have seen them contending in the

[1] Rev. xii. 7–12.

vision; the voice which he hears seems to determine the nature of the combat so far as the historical facts are concerned. No battle such as men fight is here allegorised, neither are the weapons of the combatants carnal weapons. This is no wrestling of flesh and blood against mere flesh and blood; but it is a spiritual warfare, a moral combat, fought out in the inmost recesses of the wills and affections of moral agents. And yet there is something physical about it too; for the Prince and His armies, who here contend against the Serpent, are of a twofold nature; immortal, immaterial spirits, yet dwelling in a body of flesh and blood, and conquering by means of that flesh and blood; for "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."[1] These are the spiritual weapons by which this victory over the spiritual power of Satan is won: the Blood of Christ, and a faithful testimony sealed by the blood of Martyrdom.

Such, then, seems to be the historical combat represented under symbols in this Allegory; the victory gained by Christ in His Own Person and in the Persons of His early Martyrs over all the agents of the Devil.[2]

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the 10th verse, which tells us the results of the victory over Satan; the salvation of those who belong to heaven, the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom, and the termination of the accusations of Satan. Christ's long-promised Kingdom is from this time set up, and those who are on His side shall no longer be condemned in consequence of their former sins, of which Satan accuses them, for Jesus has made an

[1] Rev. xii. 11.

[2] "Angeli, quorum virtute utitur draco adversus Michaelem, sunt mundi principes. . . . Habemus et Michaelem, hoc est Christum, nostræ pugnæ agonotheten."—*Bullingeri Conciones*, p. 46.

Atonement for them. The Death of Jesus in the Body on the cross was the death of Satan in the spirit, the end of his power over the souls of the redeemed: the end of his power over their souls, but not over their bodies, until, like Christ, their Prince, they too have "loved not their lives unto the death," and have sealed their testimony to the truth with their life's blood.

There is another and a more fearful result of this victory. Satan's power over the children of God is diminished, but his hold over the children of this world is firmer than ever. And not only so: perceiving that he has outwitted himself, that he is defeated by that very apparent victory which he had gained over the Incarnate Son of God, beholding the deliverance of so many of the sons of men from his power, understanding that the final establishment of Christ's Kingdom and his own judgment must be at hand, his wrath is more fierce than ever against all those who are still partakers of flesh and blood, who are still, so far at least as the body is concerned, under his power.

The Serpent is thrown down to the ground, bruised and mangled, but for a short time the life is still left in him. In the writhings of his agony he beholds the prey escaping from his jaws; in the rage of despair and the impotence of defeated malice he spits his venom on all those who are still within his reach; he fiercely devours those whom he gets into his mouth. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." The heavenly state of man is henceforth secure; Satan shall no longer, as in the days of Job, accuse him day and night before God, for there is One Mightier than he, that answereth the accuser, that blotteth out in His Own Blood the handwriting which recorded the condemnation of the human race. Man's heavenly state is now secure; henceforth "blessed are the

dead which die in the Lord," for "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." Yet it hath pleased the Lord to leave their bodies still under the power of the Evil One. Through much tribulation must they, one and all, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath a short time." Woe to all those chiefly, who are not only in the world but of it, who mind earthly things; for henceforth they are more than ever under the power of the Devil: they are like the man out of whom the devil was cast, but into whom seven other devils were allowed to enter; their last end is worse than the first. But woe also to all who still partake of flesh and blood, even though they belong to Christ, for they shall be hated of all men for Christ's sake; they shall only conquer when, like Him, they love not their lives unto the death. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." So far as this world is concerned, Our Saviour's rule will always hold good: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it;" his body shall die in this world, but his soul shall live for ever in God's presence, and Christ will raise him up at the last day.

Such are the results of this great victory. "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." Eternal Salvation is come to all mankind who will lay hold of it; and strength to conquer Satan by faith in the Blood of Christ, and by the word of testimony, and, if need be, by martyrdom itself;[1]

[1] "Οὐδεὶς Θεοφόρον ἀποκαλεῖ κακοδαίμονα· ἀφεστήκασι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ δαιμόνια."—*Martyrium S. Ignatii*, c. 2.

the Kingdom of Christ is set up on earth and in heaven, militant in the former, and in the latter triumphant.

The details of the Allegory when examined more closely seem to confirm this interpretation. Whatever deeper meaning the passage may have; whatever comforting assurance it may imply, that our battles with sin on earth are fought for us and with us by the Angels in heaven; whoever Michael may be; whether he be a created Archangel or THE ANGEL OF THE LORD—the vision certainly allegorises the Victory of Christ, represented here by Michael, whose name signifies Who-is-like God?—the victory of Him who is called "The image of the invisible God;"[1] "The brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person."[2]

The battle which St. John sees he describes as taking place "in heaven;" just as before he saw the Travailing Woman "in heaven," and the Serpent also "in heaven." But this can only mean that representation of heaven up to which he was called at the beginning of the vision described in the 4th chapter.

The reader will remember that one great picture seems to have remained before the eyes of the Apostle during all the time in which the visions between the 4th and 19th chapters were seen. This picture was the representation, under allegorical symbols, of heaven. It formed the scenery in which the plot of the drama was laid. It was not really heaven, the literal place into which Christ entered on His Ascension, but it was a pictorial and symbolical representation of heaven, exhibited in some miraculous manner before the eyes or imagination of the prophet.

The heaven, then, spoken of in this 12th chapter is that scene described in the 4th chapter. The door of

[1] Col. i. 15. [2] Heb. i. 3.

heaven was opened, and the Apostle was invited to enter; and when he did enter he beheld the symbolic representatives of the Holy Trinity; the Throne of God, the Lamb, the emblems of the Spirit, the representatives of the whole Creation, and of the Church. In this place the Apostle remained, and from it he seems to have been able to see the earth also, from which he had been taken up, either really or more probably "in the spirit," in imagination or in a trance. In this place, also, he saw successively all the visions which illustrate the Warfare of the Rider on the White Horse, until that Rider appears again. In this place, therefore, he beholds the "great sign" of the Travailing Woman, the "other sign" of the "great red serpent," and, in the passage under consideration, the battle between Michael and the Serpent.

Out of this heaven he sees the Serpent cast down to the earth. And the meaning of this symbolical act of casting the Serpent down to the earth is then explained. It implies the annihilation in heaven of the accuser's power. The voice declares that Salvation, Strength, and Christ's Kingdom have come. Why? For the reason immediately given. "Because the accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night." In anticipation of which victory, Our Saviour expressed Himself by a similar figure: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give you power . . . over all the power of the enemy."[1] "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."[2]

Man's restoration to the Divine favour was indeed intended from the beginning of the world, and predicted under the figure of the bruising of the serpent's head; but it was not accomplished until the Seed of the Woman had been born and had suffered death for all his brethren. Up

[1] St. Luke x. 18, 19. [2] St. John xii. 31; Col. ii. 13–15.

to that time no answer had been given to the accuser, and he could, if we may so speak, demand the condemnation of man as a right founded upon the immutable justice of God. Man's eternal state could not then be really secure until the accusations of Satan had been answered; until the pardon of the fallen creature had been made compatible, not only with the mercy, but also with the justice of the Creator. The heavens, therefore, are called upon to rejoice when man's heavenly state has been made safe, an event represented in the Allegory by the expulsion of man's accuser from heaven.

There is also cause to rejoice that so much power has been given to the true members of the kingdom of heaven, even during the time of their pilgrimage on earth. For although woe is denounced on all the inhabiters of the earth, in consequence of the exasperation of Satan caused by his defeat; the faithful servants of a Crucified Redeemer may henceforth be more than conquerors, "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and because they love not their lives to the death." Henceforth they may walk in safety, if they will put on the whole armour of God, and especially if they will bear the shield of faith, by which they shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.

But woe, indeed, may well be denounced upon all those who are not only dwelling upon the earth but also living upon earthly principles; to them, indeed, the Devil shall come down, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath a short time."

It is evident that the woe here denounced upon the inhabiters of the earth chiefly relates to the wrath which Satan feels against faithful men during the "short time" that they are exposed to his persecutions in this world, previous to the time when, like their Divine Prince, they are,

by a faithful death, "caught up unto God, and to his throne." It is evident that it relates chiefly to this, for in the 13th verse, immediately following, the mode in which Satan gratified his anger is described. "And when the serpent saw that he was cast unto the earth;" that is to say, when the Devil perceived that his power over fallen man was limited to this world, because man's Eternal Salvation was accomplished, "he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child;" that is to say, he persecuted the Church of Christ, he persecuted all those who still remained exposed to his temptations. "Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."[1]

Satan does not torment the wicked in this life, unless he believes that such torment will make them curse God in their hearts. As a general rule, he is the false friend of the wicked here, that by the temptations of the world and the flesh he may gain them as his own for ever. He tries these temptations also upon the servants of God; and, alas! in these degenerate days he too often finds them sufficient, nay, more than sufficient, to draw their hearts from God. But when these temptations do not succeed, when he finds, as in the case of Job, that no prosperity will corrupt the righteous, or, as in the case of the early Christians, that they willingly deny themselves the pleasures of the world and of the flesh that they may love Christ more; then Satan changes his plan; then he has "great wrath, knowing that his time is short," knowing that these chosen ones will soon be out of his reach for ever; then he raises up fierce persecution against them; then he stimulates their enemies to try their faith by the torment of their bodies; and then also he often outwits himself, for often, though they are tortured,

[1] Rev. i. 10

they will not "accept deliverance, that they may obtain a better resurrection;" by the death of Martyrdom they are "caught up unto God, and to his throne;" they cast down the Serpent and overcome him, "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and because they love not their lives to the death." [1]

It was, then, the wrath of Satan which brought about the cruel persecutions of the early Christians. The Serpent persecuted the Woman because he had been vanquished by her Seed.

Now, we know that these persecutions lasted about three hundred years, and that they were then put an end to by the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. That very Roman Empire, which Satan had so long made use of for the persecution of the Church, at last became her friend. This is an historical fact. It is represented, therefore, by a fitting symbol in the Allegory. "And to the woman were given the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." [2]

The Great Eagle here evidently means the Great Roman Empire.[3] For this symbol is used by Ezekiel for the two great empires brought most into connection with

[1] Justin speaks of princes as the instruments of the serpent for the persecution of the faithful up to the time of the second Advent; "ne vos insectentur principes, qui nefarii et fallacis spiritus, serpentis, operatoine eos qui nomen Christi confitentur occidere et insectari non desinent, donec iterum adsit et destruat omnes et digna cuique præmia rependat."—*Dial. cum Tryph.* c. 39.

[2] Rev. xii. 14.

[3] "The great Eagle is the Roman Empire. His two wings, two Cæsars of the Empire parted into two parts, the West and East, by whose protection and conduct the Church departed into an eremitical state."—Mede, p. 45.

God's people at the time of their captivity, Babylon and Egypt. The Babylonish captivity is represented by the prophet in an Allegory. A Great Eagle takes the highest branch of a cedar and plants it near a river. The cedar branch there becomes a spreading vine. But there was, he says, another Great Eagle; and towards this the vine bent her roots and extended her branches. But the Lord said that the vine should wither in consequence of this. The prophet is then commanded to explain the Allegory, and to say that the first Eagle signified the king of Babylon; his plucking and planting the cedar by the river, his carrying the Jews into captivity; the spreading of the vine towards the other Eagle, the Jews forming alliances, contrary to the covenant they had made with Babylon and contrary to God's command, with the Egyptians.

Thus the symbol of an eagle is used to denote a mighty empire.[1]

But the Two Wings of the Great Eagle are mentioned. It is not merely said that the woman was carried on the wings of an eagle into the wilderness. This might have signified that she was transported to a place of safety in the wilderness by the power and Providence of God. Thus God's miraculous interference to save His people from Egypt, and to take them through the Red Sea into the wilderness, was figuratively described: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself."[2] This interpretation is by no means excluded. The Church was rescued from persecuting Pagans, was borne into a place providentially made ready for her in the world, by the power of God's overruling Providence. The vision does not exclude this interpretation, but it implies more; it points out the particular instruments which the Providence

[1] Ezek. xvii.; see also Hosea viii. 1. [2] Exod. xix. 4.

of God used for His purpose, the means by which He put a stop to persecution and carried the Church safely over one of the greatest convulsions in the affairs of men which history records.

It is not only said that the Woman escaped upon eagle's wings, but emphatically that she was carried on the Two Wings of the Great Eagle.

The Eagle, therefore, having been already adopted by the ancient prophets as the symbol of a great worldly Empire; the conversion of the Roman Emperors having been the means of putting a stop to the heathen persecutions of the Church; the Roman Empire having been about the same time divided into the Eastern and Western Empires; the Church having been established in both those branches; and this establishment of the Church throughout the two divisions of the Empire having been the means, under Providence, of her being able to outlive the convulsions of the fifth and following centuries: all these things taken together lead us to conjecture that the flight of the Woman into the wilderness upon the Two Wings of the Great Eagle, into that appointed place where she is supported for a specified time from the face of the Serpent, denotes the escape of the Church from the persecutions of the Pagans by the conversion of the Empire, and her safe passage, in consequence of her establishment in the Empire, through those centuries of anarchy which immediately preceded her final settlement, about the beginning of the ninth century, in mediæval or modern Christendom.[1]

We may observe how carefully, on this supposition, the vision marks the distinction between the position of the

[1] "Desertum videtur mihi vocare regna et populos, quæ . . . . titulum Christianitatis et Ecclesiæ præ se ferunt, cum tamen nihil minus sint."—Bullinger, *Conc.* p. 71.

Church ; first, when established in the Roman Empire ; secondly, whilst passing through the convulsions attending the fall of the Roman Empire ; and thirdly, when finally established in mediæval Christendom.

In the 6th verse, at the close of the first division of the Allegory, we are told briefly that "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that men should nourish her there 1,260 days." Nothing is here said about the means by which she should get into the wilderness. Neither are we told how soon she should get there ; whether she should go at once, or whether she should first, like God's ancient people in Egypt, remain under the persecution of her enemies. We are told, however, that God had made ready a certain definite position for her in the wilderness, and that as soon as she should have reached this position she should be supported there, not always, but for a certain definite time, namely, 1,260 days.

Two questions, therefore, remain to be answered respecting the destinies of the Woman. When, and by what means, does she reach her appointed place in the wilderness ?

The fortunes of the woman are symbolised again in the 13th and following verses. From these we learn that the woman does not go at once into the wilderness, but that she is first left for a while, as it were, in Egypt, under the persecutions of her enemy. "When the Serpent saw that he was cast unto the earth," as soon as the Devil found that by the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, his power in heaven was at an end ; that he had no longer any business at the Throne of God ; that it was useless any longer to accuse fallen man, because there was the Risen SON OF MAN to answer the accusation, nay, to forbid his making it ; as soon as the Devil found that

man's heavenly state was secure, and that he could no longer accomplish the eternal ruin of those who believed in Christ : he set himself to persecute the Church, which still remained on earth ; he succeeded in stirring up the power and malice of the Romans to attempt the extermination of the infant Church.

But the blood of Martyrs was the seed of the Church. "They overcame him." That is to say, not only Christ, but His Martyrs also overcame the Devil, destroyed his power over their souls, over their heavenly state, by faith in "the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," and by their disregard of tortures and death.

This state of persecution continued for about three hundred years. The Church, therefore, had not yet reached her place of safety in the wilderness. During all this time the battle was being fought out between Christ and His Martyrs, on one side, and the Devil and the Agents of his cruel malice on the other.

But God's Providence puts a stop to these persecutions by the conversion of the Roman Emperors. The Church is established in the Empire. Is this, then, her appointed place in the wilderness? No, surely not. This is only the means of her safe passage into the wilderness. She is not there yet : she is flying thither. She is in a state of safety ; she is rescued from much of Satan's power ; but she is not out of his reach yet.

Thus the brief statement of the 6th verse is developed when the Allegory takes up the subject again. Thus it is shown that two states or conditions of the Church are to precede her settlement in that place in the wilderness of the world where she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.[1]

[1] Hippolytus explains the woman to mean the Church, and thus

But what does Satan do, when he finds the persecutions of pagan Romans no longer of any avail, and, in consequence of the conversion of the Emperors, no longer possible? History will inform us. He attempts to overwhelm the Church by overthrowing the whole framework of human society.

The Allegory represents the Woman as having the Two Wings of the Great Eagle given her in order that on them she may fly to a place of security. She has not yet reached that place, where she will be defended from the open hostility of her enemy: she is only on her way thither. Now, the serpent tries to destroy her while she is on her way. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood."[1]

The woman is assisted by the Two Wings of the Great Eagle; that is to say, the Church is supported by the power and influence of the Eastern and Western branches of the Roman Empire. Upon these Wings the woman is flying into a space prepared for her of God in the wilderness; that is to say, the Church established by the Empire is passing into that position in the world which Providence always intended her to hold, and which He had long ago predicted of her, a position in which "Kings should be her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers."

But Satan desires to prevent the accomplishment of this prophecy. He has failed in his attempt to destroy the infant Church by the persecutions of the Empire, for that Empire has, through the Providence of God, become the

speaks of her dwelling in the wilderness: "Hi sunt dies mille ducenti sexaginta . . . . quibus Tyrannus rerum potietur, persequens Ecclesiam fugientem de civitate in civitatem, in solitudine et in montibus latitantem."—*Max. Bib. Vet. Pat.* xxvii. 8.

[1] Rev. xii. 15.

Eagle's Wings on which He will bear up His suffering Church. What then does Satan attempt next? He still continues to act as an open enemy to Christianity. Seeing that the woman is escaping from him on the Wings of the Great Eagle, the Serpent casts out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he may cause her to be carried away by the flood; that is to say, the Devil, finding that the Church is escaping from him through the influence and protection of the Roman Empire, stirs up multitudes of barbarians to come down like a flood upon the Roman Empire and to carry away Church and Empire together.

Water, as we have already seen, and especially a deluge of water, is the emblem of people in a state of tumult, or is used to represent the devastations of mighty armies.[1] Further on, also, in the Apocalypse we find a Woman sitting upon many waters, there explained by the prophet to mean people: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."[2] Isaiah has used the symbol in the same manner: "Behold, the Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."[3]

We must understand, therefore, by the Water cast out of the Serpent's Mouth, those inundations, as modern historians call them, of barbarians, by which Satan endeavoured to accomplish the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the destruction of the Church at the same time.[4]

[1] "Aqua, quam emisit de ore suo serpens, jussu suo populum qui persequatur eam, significat."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

[2] Rev. xvii. 15. [3] Isaiah viii. 7; lix. 19.

[4] "These obstacles were instantly swept away by the inundation of the Huns." "The Roman world was overwhelmed by the deluge of barbarians."—Gibbon, c. 34, 38.

But what became of these barbarians? They did indeed (as might have been expected from what has been already said concerning the working of Satan) persecute the Christians at first. But these persecutions were not of long continuance, and were chiefly suggested by the Pagans remaining in the Empire. "It has been already observed," writes Mosheim, "that the Goths, the Heruli, the Franks, the Huns, and the Vandals, with other fierce and warlike nations, for the most part strangers to Christianity, had invaded the Roman Empire, and rent it asunder in the most deplorable manner. Amidst these calamities, the Christians were grievous, nay, we may venture to say, the principal sufferers. It is true these savage nations were much more intent upon the acquisition of wealth and dominion than upon the propagation or support of the Pagan superstitions; nor did their cruelty and opposition to the Christians arise from any religious principle, or from an enthusiastic desire to ruin the cause of Christianity; it was merely by the instigation of the Pagans, who remained yet in the Empire, that they were excited to treat with such severity and violence the followers of Christ." "The greatest part of these barbarians embraced Christianity; though it be also true that in the beginning of their usurpations the professors of that religion suffered heavily under the rigour of their government."[1] And so the Allegory continues: "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the serpent cast out of his mouth."[2]

Is there anything in history which will answer to this part of the vision? How did the earth absorb the great deluge of barbarians, as Gibbon calls it, which threatened to destroy the Woman by sweeping away that Empire on whose Eagles she was borne?

[1] Cent. v., chap. ii. sect. 1. [2] Rev. xii. 16.

The dissolution of the Roman Empire, especially the western portion of it, was one of the most remarkable revolutions mankind has ever witnessed. But the manner in which the Christian Church survived it is far more remarkable; and in her deliverance the hand of God is most distinctly traceable. "Scarcely," writes a modern historian, "was this great change accomplished, the Christian religion planted, the Church founded, when new events disturbed the world. The Roman Empire, so long accustomed to conquest and dominion, was now in its turn attacked by its neighbours, overrun, conquered. Christianity itself was shaken in the general convulsion. In the hour of their utmost peril the Romans once more remembered the Etruscan mysteries. . . . But these were mere transient impulses; whilst the Empire in the Western Provinces crumbled into ruins, the edifice of the Roman Church remained solid and entire."[1] How was this? Because the very earth helped her, by absorbing in the rich provinces of Rome these savage, ignorant, and Pagan tribes; and so by rendering their invasion gradual, and giving her the opportunity of converting them to Christianity, as they settled.

These barbarians, indeed, totally changed the face of Europe. Thus Russell says, "In little more than a century from the first northern invasion, scarce any remains of the laws, manners, arts, or literature of the Romans was left in our quarter of the globe." "New governments, laws, languages; new manners, customs, dresses; new names of men and of countries everywhere prevailed. A total change was produced in the state of Europe." When the Romans conquered Greece, the Grecians civilised their conquerors. Not so the degenerate sons of the ancient Republic. The completeness of barbarian conquest over the very civilisation of the Empire is thus described by

[1] Ranke's *Hist. of the Popes*, i. 13.

Alison :[1] "Their conquests were not, in the end, a mere change of government, or the substitution of one race of monarchs for another ; but a total subversion of the property, customs, and institutions of the vanquished people." Yet the institutions of Christ survived the change. The Ark of the Covenant, tossed by its billows, rode triumphantly over the mighty deep of this almost universal deluge. And again, as in the literal flood, the earth at length absorbed the tempestuous element. That which Roman refinement had failed to effect, the Gospel gradually brought about. "Christianity," writes Gibbon,[2] "which opened the gates of heaven to the barbarians, introduced an important change in their moral and political condition." "The direct authority of religion was less effectual than the holy communion, which united them with their Christian brethren in spiritual friendship. The influence of these sentiments contributed to secure their fidelity in the service or the alliance of the Romans ; to alleviate the horrors of war, to moderate the insolence of conquest, and to preserve, in the downfall of the Empire, a permanent respect for the name and institutions of Rome." So that, as he observes, "The pure and genuine influence of Christianity may be traced in its beneficial though imperfect effects on the barbarian proselytes of the North. If the decline of the Roman Empire was hastened" (such was his opinion) "by the conversion of Constantine, his victorious religion broke the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors."[3]

Thus the Woman with her uncarnal weapons fought for her own life, and vigorously attempted to withstand the Torrent issuing from the Serpent's Mouth. But how was it that she was able to succeed? Because the earth helped

[1] *Modern Europe*, Introduction. [2] Chap. xxxvii.
[3] Chap. xxviii. Gen. Obs.

her. Because, from what are called natural causes, the fertile provinces of the Empire absorbed, as they arrived in savage tumult, these overflowing waters. And so Alison beautifully describes the gradual progress of the greatest and most complete revolution recorded in the history of the world. "It was not, however, at once or by any sudden act of violence that this complete transfer of property from the vanquished to the victors took place. The settlements of the northern nations in the provinces of the Roman Empire did not resemble the conquests either of the Roman legions or the armies of modern Europe, but were rather akin, though more violent, to the gradual inroad which the Irish poor have effected into the provinces of Western Britain in these times. Wave after wave succeeded, before the whole country was occupied; one province was overrun for a whole generation before another was invaded; and a more equitable division of goods between the natives and the conquerors at first took place than could have been expected where power was at the disposal of such rude barbarians. . . . Gradually, however, the work of spoliation was extended; . . . and at length the change was generally effected, and the land had almost everywhere passed from the Romans to the northern proprietors. Before the tenth century the change was complete."[1]

Thus did the wonderful Providence of God overrule the effects of this strange and unprecedented revolution. What image, in connection with the previous symbols of the vision, could have more fitly represented this method of settlement, this absorption of "wave after wave" in the provinces of the Empire, than that of the earth helping the woman and opening her mouth, and swallowing up the flood which the serpent cast out of his mouth?

[1] *Modern Europe*, Introduction, p. 19.

Thus Kingsley writes, though probably without any reference to this passage, in a lecture on modern history entitled "The Human Deluge":—

"Taking one's stand at Rome, and looking towards the north, what does one see for nearly a hundred years? Wave after wave rising out of the north, the land of night and wonder, and the terrible unknown; visible only as the light of Roman civilisation strikes their crests, and they dash against the Alps, and roll over through the mountain passes into the fertile plains below. Then at last they are seen too well, and you discern that the waves are living men, women, and children, horses, dogs, and cattle, all rushing headlong into the great whirlpool of Italy; and yet the gulf is never full. The earth drinks up the blood, the bones decay into the fruitful soil: the very names and memories of whole tribes are washed away. . . . Like water they flowed in, and like water they sank into the soil."

These Waters issued out of the Mouth of the Serpent to destroy the Woman who was escaping from his more open persecutions by the agency of infidel powers. Henceforth he can only persecute by professing Christian powers the faithful remnant of the Church.

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."[1]

The anger of Satan is augmented by this second defeat. He has failed in two separate attempts to extinguish altogether the light of Christianity in the world; to keep the nations still in ignorance of God through his deceptions. And he now goes away, to continue his warfare indeed, but to change his system.[2]

[1] Rev. xii. 17.

[2] "Videns non posse continuari persecutiones . . . . magis se

But, although the Devil has not been able to root out Christianity altogether, we are not to suppose that he has gained no victories over it. His tail ever draws many of the stars of heaven and casts them to the earth. He has had more influence with the servants than he had with their Master. He has not been able to destroy Christianity, to deceive the nations so as to prevent their conversion; but he has greatly corrupted it already, and as the Allegory proceeds we shall see that he has power to corrupt it still more. Many of those who ought to shine like the stars of heaven, to be the lights of the Church, are drawn away by the enticements of the enemy, and often cast down to the earth, robbed of all their heavenly lustre, and made in all things the children of this world and the instruments of the Evil One.

The Serpent now goes away. But he does not quit the scene altogether. He removes, as it were, to a more remote part of the stage; is no longer the open adversary of the Church, but puts forward other actors to take the leading and more prominent parts in the Drama; as we shall see in the next chapter, he gives "his power, and his throne, and great authority"[1] to another.

The object also of the Serpent's warfare is henceforth slightly changed. He is still wroth, indeed, with the Woman, that is to say, with the whole Christian Church, the very name of which he had endeavoured to sweep from the earth together with the Empire which supported her; but his actual hostilities are henceforth chiefly directed against the more faithful portions of the Church, against "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." In the

armavit mysterio facinoris insistere, quo possit jugiter insidiari."—Bede, *in loc.*

[1] Rev. xiii. 2.

language of the preceding Allegory, the battle of the enemy is henceforth directed against the Two Witnesses, who prophesy in sorrow for 1,260 days; against those faithful members of the Church who, by their teaching and example, keep alive the light of truth.

By-and-by we shall find Satan fighting openly against the whole Church, and against all the truths of Christianity. As he did for many centuries after the first Coming of Christ and always before; so, towards the end of the world, the Devil will fight openly against the Church. But for a certain definite period of years, represented in the Allegory as 42 months, 1,260 days, and a time, times, and half a time, Satan does not fight openly against the whole Church, but only against the true and living portion of it, against those who are in one passage called the "witnesses" of Christ, and, in this 12th chapter, that "remnant of the woman's seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

So far indeed is Satan from fighting, during this period, against the Ruling Powers of the World, which are also the Ruling Powers in the Visible Church (for in mediæval and modern Christendom the alliance between the world and the visible Church is perfected): so far is Satan from fighting against these, that he uses them from time to time as his instruments for the propagation and support of false doctrines and the persecution of those Witnesses who testify against them. And it is this method of carrying on his warfare which we find allegorised in that portion of the Apocalypse which we are to consider in the following chapter.

CHAPTER X

THE BEAST, HIS IMAGE, AND THE SECOND BEAST

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion : and the serpent gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death ; and his deadly wound was healed ; and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the serpent which gave power unto the beast ; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into

captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." [1]

Such is St. John's description of the first and principal actor in that scene of the Drama which allegorises the warfare of the Serpent with the Remnant of the Woman's Seed; or, in plainer words, the battle of the Devil against the faithful Witnesses of the Truth, after he had failed to prevent Christianity by open violence from being adopted as the religion of the world.

Satan is in great measure defeated by the establishment of any form of Christianity in the world. For the visible Church, however corrupt, will always contain many honest and good hearts who can distinguish truth from falsehood, genuine religion from all spurious imitations of it; and Christianity, even when its maxims are only partially carried out, is infinitely superior to any Pagan system of divine worship. But, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Satan was defeated in every attempt to hinder the Establishment of the Church and the general adoption of Christianity by the more important and influential nations of the world; and, having been so defeated, he prepares to continue his warfare against the faithful few who dare to stand up as Witnesses to the Truth.

The Allegory informs us, then, that the Serpent gives his power, and throne, and great authority to another, that is to say, to a Beast, which St. John sees coming up out of the sea.

Now we are not left to conjecture what power may be intended by this symbol, for, as we have seen before, the historical representative of the figure is fixed for us by the divinely interpreted visions of Daniel.

More than six hundred years before the Birth of Christ,

[1] Rev. xiii. 1–10.

and while the Jews were in captivity in Babylonia, God revealed to Daniel, by a succession of allegorical visions, a sort of outline of the history of those nations which, to the very end of the world, should be connected with His Own Peculiar People. First of all, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt that he saw a great statue of a man standing before him. The head was of gold; the breast and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of brass; the legs of iron; and the feet and toes partly of clay and partly of iron. Whilst the royal dreamer was beholding, a stone fell upon the feet, which, after it had crushed and utterly destroyed the whole image, became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The king, to test his wise men, required them to tell him what he had dreamt before they offered any interpretation. This, of course, they were unable to do. But both the dream and its interpretation were revealed to the prophet Daniel. He explained the Image to point out a succession of kingdoms on the earth, which should at last be utterly destroyed by the Universal Kingdom of God. He said that the head of the image symbolised the then existing Babylonian kingdom; and that the silver and brass represented two succeeding kingdoms. Then he showed him that the legs of iron pointed to a fourth Empire, as much more powerful than its predecessors as iron is harder than other things. This of course meant the Roman Empire. He then continues the interpretation thus: "Whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided."[1]

Now here we have the historical fact that, after the fall of Rome, the supremacy did not remain in any one nation, but was held by a family of nations, springing from its ruins, represented by a very simple and suitable figure.

[1] Dan. ii. 41, 42.

We know from history that those parts of the world in which the people of God were, that those nations more immediately connected with them, were subject to four Monarchies, to four great and almost universal empires : the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. The last of these was very different from its predecessors. There was a vigour in it, and, as it were, a strength of constitution more enduring than the sudden and feverish energy imparted to the others by the genius of their several monarchs. The vigour of the Roman Empire resulted from the character of her people, the discipline of her legions, the wisdom of her statutes, the consummate prudence of her policy. She was like a tree rendered hard and durable by the slowness of its growth. And therefore, in the vision, she is represented as an iron kingdom, hard and durable as iron.

Following the course of history, we know that this iron kingdom was at last dismembered. Hordes of barbarians overran and plundered her Western Provinces, and the Eastern Empire was desolated by the armies of the Arabian Impostor. The result of this, after the anarchy of many centuries, was the rise of that cluster or family of nations which formed mediæval Christendom.

Mediæval and Modern Christendom, embracing now the Western hemisphere, may be called a family of nations. They are separate and independent nations, and, although united by the ties of a common religion, and still further by frequent intermarriages of the royal families and people, separate and independent they have continued for more than a thousand years. Many have been the attempts of ambitious princes to gain universal dominion in Europe, yet the independence of the several nations remains. We attribute this state of things to natural causes, to the mutual jealousy of nations inventing a modern theory which we call

the Balance of Power. But what did Daniel know of these natural causes, when, though Rome itself was an unknown and insignificant city in a remote part of the world, enlightened by the prescient Spirit of the Lord, he said, "the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron . . . the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron . . . the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men (shall intermarry), but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." [1]

"There shall be in it of the strength of the iron." How true is this! How vigorous, how durable, is that cluster of nations, partly united and partly divided, which Gibbon calls "the Great Republic of the West:" a republic of nations, in which all have a voice in council, all often combine for some common cause, but all, even the smallest and weakest, are still separate and independent. How much there is in modern Christendom of the Iron of ancient Rome! Notwithstanding the utter desolation which fell upon the Mother of Nations, with what awe, with what reverence did her memory impress her children! They study her literature, they admire her heroes, they adopt her laws, they imitate her policy, they revive the very name and office of her Emperors and regard them as the sources of all power and honour. And because they do this there is in them much of the stability of Rome; "there is in them of the strength of the iron."

But they are still divided: "they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

Some writers have attempted to enumerate exactly Ten Kingdoms, neither more nor less; and to point them out

[1] Dan. ii. 41–43.

as the Kingdoms specially symbolised in this vision. But what is the object of the prophecy? Surely not to tell us that exactly ten separate nations would spring from the ruin of ancient Rome, but to teach us that no one nation would gain universal power as the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman had done before. What other number, except ten, could have been mentioned with any consistency? The image is that of a man, and therefore it has ten toes on its feet.

Such is the first vision by which an outline of the History of those Empires more immediately connected with God's people, first with the Jews and then with Christians, is given to the prophet Daniel. The subsequent visions explain and develop this outline. They give the names of some of the Empires; and they add details here and there to the original outline afforded by the Image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

In the first year of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, Daniel himself had a dream. He saw Four Beasts come up from the sea, which were afterwards explained to mean Four Kingdoms. But his attention was specially directed to the fourth, which was very different from the others, and far more powerful, having great iron teeth and ten horns. While the prophet was beholding, another little horn rose up among the ten, stronger than the rest, and plucked up three of the other horns by the roots. These Ten Horns are also explained to the prophet to mean Ten Kingdoms, which should spring out of the Fourth Kingdom; and the Little Horn coming up among the ten is explained to signify a kingdom which should spring up among the others, mightier than its fellows, and subduing three of them. Of this king it is said, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, and times, and

half a time."[1] The vision represented this power as ruling up to the very Day of Judgment. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit . . . the Judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."[2] And in the explanation of the vision given afterwards, we read, "the Judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."[3]

Thus we have an additional symbol introduced into this second vision. There are, as before, symbols for the four great Empires: the Eagle-winged Lion of Babylon; the Bear representing Persia; the Leopard with four wings and four heads, symbolising the Grecian or Macedonian Empire, divided after Alexander to the four winds; and the fourth terrible beast, with iron teeth and ten horns, reminding the prophet of the fourth iron kingdom of the former vision. But whereas, in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the fourth or Roman Empire was merely represented as divided into separate and independent kingdoms, which should continue to the end of the world; the rise of a Kingdom among these ten kingdoms, which should become the most powerful, and should subdue three of them, is symbolised in this vision of the Four Beasts.

The ten kingdoms are still represented as continuing to the end; but One rises up among them more powerful than the rest, and subdues three. This power is spoken of as

[1] Dan. vii. 25. [2] Dan. vii. 9-11. [3] Dan. vii. 26, 27.

the chief opponent of the Most High and His Saints; and precisely the same things are predicted of him as of the Ten-horned Beast in the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse.

It will be well to compare the vision of St. John with that of Daniel.

The Apostle sees One Beast "rise up out of the sea;" and Daniel saw "four great beasts come up from the sea." The One Beast in the Apocalypse "was like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion." But Daniel saw four beasts: the first like a lion; the second like a bear; the third like a leopard; and the fourth different from the others, but one that devoured them all, and brake them in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet. There can be no doubt that the one beast of St. John stands for the same idea as the four beasts of Daniel.[1] The same idea was symbolised in the visions of Daniel, first by one image consisting of four different metals, and then by the four distinct symbols of four beasts. Just so, that same historical outline which Daniel gives by a succession of four beasts, St. John embodies in the single symbol of one beast made up of the parts of several different animals. But the order is purposely reversed by St. John. In Daniel we have the lion, the bear, the leopard; but in the Apocalypse the leopard first, then the bear, then the lion. St. John is tracing back the course of history; but Daniel is looking forward. The particular parts of the animals mentioned

[1] "Divini viri Danielis illa celebris atque hominum sermone pervulgata visio, Assyriorum et Medorum, ac Macedonum regnum, uniusmodi, atque ex una quodque natione conflatum, uni belluæ comparavit, aliud nimirum ursæ, aliud leænæ, aliud pardo. Quarta autem visio, hoc est, horrenda bellua. . . . Romanorum Imperium perspicue designabat, utpote ex omnibus nationibus et tribubus compactum, omnique robore et gloria in seipso præditum."—*Isidori Pelus. Epist.* lib. i. 218.

are simply those which are the most characteristic in each : the skin of the leopard, the paws of the bear, and the mouth of the lion ; but the order in which they are mentioned is highly consistent with the date of the vision. In Daniel's age, at least when he saw this vision of the four beasts, the first or Babylonian Empire was still in its glory ; the Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empires existed only in the counsels of the Almighty. How different was the state of things when St. John beheld this One Beast ! That Fourth Empire was then existing which had destroyed, or brought under its yoke, all that remained of its predecessors. The Fourth Beast of Daniel had been revealed in history, and had devoured and broken to pieces the Leopard, the Bear, and the Lion, and had stamped the residue with its feet. In the days of St. John, Rome was mistress of the world, and called herself the Eternal City. But the Roman Empire was the result of the dismemberment or dissolution of the previous great Empires. How fitting, then, it seems that she should be represented in St. John's age as One Beast made up of the different parts of other Beasts. Even in the visions of Daniel, the remnants of the first three Empires are represented as existing a little time, though their dominion had been taken from them. Although in one passage he describes the fourth beast as devouring, breaking in pieces, and treading underfoot the three preceding beasts ; yet in another passage he says, "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." [1]

We must conclude, then, from this comparison, as far as it has yet been carried on, that the historical ideas of the Prophet and the Apostle are precisely the same. History is personified in their visions ; and the same outline of history is symbolised in Daniel's vision by Four Beasts,

[1] Dan. vii. 12.

and in St. John's by One. The visions are nearly the same; there is only a slight difference, and that difference is obviously due to the date of the latter vision. When Daniel prophesied, the Empire of the World was in the hands of the Babylonians. It had to pass in succession to the Persians, Grecians, and Romans; and, finally, to that Cluster of Kingdoms which was destined to hold the supreme power until the end of the world. This grand historical truth was personified, first by the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and then by the vision of four beasts. And the same truth was represented to the imagination of St. John by One Beast, the representative of that One Empire out of Daniel's four which was existing in his day.[1]

To understand these visions, we must learn to take a general and comprehensive view of history from the days of Daniel to the end of the world. Now, human historians sometimes endeavour to impart comprehensive views of history to the minds of others by means of tables and symbols. They have their chronological tables arranged in columns, or their maps and streams of history. The histories of all the more important empires of the world are given at one view, as so many streams issuing from a common source, and mixing or separating one from another in their course. In such pictures the Roman Empire is represented as a mighty stream, absorbing many others in the age of its glory, but afterwards dividing itself into many separate rivers.

That which human historians so often do to explain the history of the past is done in these visions of Daniel and St. John with reference to the future. The outline of

[1] "Manifestius . . . de his decem regibus, in quos dividetur quod nunc regnat imperium, significavit Joannes in Apocalypsi, edisserens quæ fuerint decem cornua, quæ a Daniele visa sunt."—Irenæus, i. 787.

the future history of the nations connected with God's people from the age of Daniel to the end of the world is represented at one view, not by tables and streams of history, but by symbols; such as the image of a man made up of different metals, or the figure of a wild beast with seven heads and ten horns.

But the prophecies have another object in view besides that of impressing upon our imaginations a pictorial outline of future history. History is the record of the actions of the ruling powers of the world in every age; and prophecy is a prediction of the general character of their actions so far as they concern the people of God. We learn from studying the history of the past to generalise the motives and principles of human action, but prophecy gives us these principles by anticipation. Thus it represents to us the ruling powers of the world as always, in the main, hostile to the cause of Christ. And this truth it teaches in the Allegory before us, by representing the dominant world-power as a wild beast persecuting the saints.[1] Because this world-power, from the age of Daniel to the End, is held, first, by four great monarchies succeeding one another, and then jointly by a cluster of nations which spring from the fourth monarchy; it is represented by One Beast, whose body is made up of parts of three other beasts, and who has Ten Horns. And because during the whole course of history the powers of the world are the active enemies of Christ, a symbol is chosen to whom actions may be fitly attributed, such as the image of a man or of a wild beast.[2]

[1] "Monarchias orbis quatuor Daniel per Bestias adumbravit, qui interim non omnes earum principes bestias esse putavit, neque omnes damnavit principes, neque existimavit nihil integri in iis fuisse aut futurum esse, tametsi potior pars depravatissima fuerit."—Bullinger, *Sermon LX. on the Apocalypse.*

[2] Gibbon says of Julian that he thought right to "subdue the

By an easy exercise of the imagination, we can learn to regard one kingdom, during the whole course of its history, as an unit ; and to speak of its actions in this or that century as we should of the actions of an individual in his youth, manhood, or old age. By a process scarcely more difficult, we may soon learn to regard the whole World-power from the time of Daniel to the End as an individual enemy of God's people. But, at the same time, it is obvious that the possessors of this power, the worldly rulers of God's people in this or that century, may differ one from another to any extent in character, actions, and other circumstances, without, as it were, separating themselves from the one historical idea embodied and personified by the symbols of prophecy. From the nature of things, symbolic prophecy must represent by few symbols, and by few actions, that which, in the fulfilment of prophecy, may be the result of many actions performed by many agents throughout many ages of the world's history. And it is only because these many agents hold, each in their own age, the supreme world-power, and are generally hostile to the religion of Jesus, that they can be all represented by the One Symbol of a Wild Beast. We shall find, when we come to examine each symbol closely, that marks of time are added, by which we may be led to discover whether the symbol is used, in the particular passage we are considering, for the world-power in the age of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, or mediæval and modern Christendom.

Now, we meet with this symbol of a Beast with Ten Horns, first, as we have seen, in the 7th chapter of Daniel; and we then find it again several times in the Apocalypse, and each time with some peculiar mark appended by which

wild beast which, according to the lively metaphor of Aristotle, seldom fails to ascend the throne of a despot." (Ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπον κελεύων ἄρχειν προστίθησι καὶ θηρίον.)—Chap. 22.

we may understand to what period in the history of the One Great World-power the symbol specially relates.

Thus, in the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse, the enemy of the "seed of the woman," and of the infant Church, is "a great red serpent having seven heads and ten horns." This serpent, of course, means the Devil. But, then, the Devil is an invisible spirit, and he does not act in this world except through the agency of men. Now, the ancient Pagan Roman Empire was, without question, Satan's human instrument by which he fought against Christ and His Church. Let us, then, observe the mark of date expressed by the symbol. Pagan Rome was then reigning, and she, as we shall presently see, was one of the Seven Heads of the World-power. St. John, therefore, beholds Crowns on the Heads of the Serpent, and not yet on the horns, for the time of the reign of the representatives of the horns had not yet come. "Behold a great red serpent having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."[1] After Satan had failed to conquer the Church by the persecutions of the Roman Empire ; after the Roman Empire had established the Church ; after Satan had again failed in his attempt to destroy Empire and Church together by the inundations of the Barbarians ; then he gave his power, his throne, and great authority to another successor to the world's empire ; to a revived shadow of ancient Rome, regarded as the Head of a republic of independent nations, all reigning together with him. And now, what difference do we observe in the symbol to which the Serpent gives his power? It is, again, a Beast with Seven Heads and Ten Horns. But the historical representatives of the Horns are now reigning, and not those of any of the Heads. The Crowns, therefore, are no longer on the Heads, but on the Horns of the Beast. "I . . . saw a beast rise up out

[1] Rev. xii. 3.

of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns." [1]

The meaning of the Seven Heads is given in the 17th chapter of the Apocalypse, where the Seven-headed, Ten-horned Beast again appears as the symbol of the World-power. The Seven Heads are there explained to point out those seven hills upon which the City of Rome was built. This is an addition to the symbol beyond what we find in the Fourth Beast of Daniel. The Beast of Daniel has Ten Horns on its Head; but the Beast of the Apocalypse has Seven Heads, as well as Ten Horns. And these Seven Heads are added to identify the symbol still more fully with the City of Rome. "The Seven Heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." [2]

But the Seven Heads do not only mean seven mountains: they are also explained to the Apostle to typify Seven Kings or Kingdoms; Seven developments of the World-power succeeding one another. "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come." [3] It is not of much consequence to be able to point out the historical representatives of those Five Heads which are here said to have fallen, because we know what kingdom existed in the prophet's day. The expression "and one is" must be understood of the then existing Roman Empire. But the visions of Daniel certainly allude to five monarchies before that of Rome, as connected with God's people. Although, in the vision of the four beasts, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman Monarchies alone are personified, he divides the Grecian Monarchy in a later vision to the four winds, upon the death of its founder; and then he confines his attention to two of the Grecian kingdoms, as the only ones connected immediately with the Jews.

[1] Rev. xiii. 1. [2] Rev. xvii. 9. [3] Rev. xvii. 10.

In the 8th chapter of Daniel the Macedonian kingdom is symbolised by a goat with one very conspicuous horn, explained afterwards to mean the first king, that is to say, Alexander the Great. When this horn is broken, four others come up in its place; and one of them, that is, Antiochus, becomes very powerful, and persecutes God's people.

Again, in the 11th chapter, Daniel speaks of "a mighty king, who should stand up and rule with great dominion," meaning, as anyone may perceive from the context, Alexander the Great. After speaking of the division of his Empire between his generals, he confines his attention to the Egyptian Kingdom of the Ptolemies and the Syrian dynasty of the Seleucidæ. These he calls respectively the King of the North and the King of the South; and he afterwards makes one of them the type of That Great Enemy, who should rise up in the latter ages of the world, to persecute the Church.

But even if Daniel had not prophesied of these kingdoms, we might have conjectured that the Author of the Apocalypse was alluding to them, when, speaking of the previous developments of the world-power, he said, "five are fallen." For it is a notorious historical fact that the people of God were, in the age of Daniel, under the Babylonians; then under the Persians; then under the Macedonians of Alexander; then under the Ptolemies of Egypt; then under the Seleucidæ of Syria; until at last they fell, together with the rest of the world, under the iron yoke of the Romans. The fact, however, that Daniel has mentioned these five monarchies, and dwelt so much upon them, renders more probable this interpretation of the symbol.

We may conclude, then, that the Seven-headed, Ten-horned Beast, which St. John sees, is the personification of the World-power, through which Satan continues his warfare

against the faithful witnesses of Christ ; not against the whole visible Church, calling itself Christian, but against the more faithful members of it. He is no friend to the visible Church, and would gladly have swept it away, together with the Empire, which became, through God's Providence, its supporter. He is "wroth with the woman," for God has given her a safe resting-place in the wilderness of the world, in spite of all his exertions ; God has made "kings her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers," therefore he is wroth with her ; but, from despair or subtlety, he discontinues his state of open warfare with her, directing his more violent persecutions from henceforth against her more faithful children, wherever he may find them. "The Serpent was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." [1]

We may conclude also that the Seven Heads typify, in the first place, the seven hills of Rome ; and, secondly, that they symbolise seven developments of the world-power, namely, Babylon, Persia, the Alexandrian Empire, Egypt, and Syria (the five which had fallen when St. John prophesied) ; Rome (the one existing in his day), and, lastly, that development of the world-power which intervened between the fall of Rome and the consolidation of the Mediæval Kingdoms. For which reason the Ten-horned Beast of St. John is described as being an Eighth development of the World-power, coming after or out of the seven ; "the beast . . . is the eighth, and is of the seven ;" [2] literally, proceeding from or out of the seven, or coming after them. And further, we may conclude that the Ten Horns refer to those ten kingdoms spoken of by Daniel as

[1] Rev. xii. 17. [2] Rev. xvii. 11.

the nations who should jointly hold the world-power from the dismemberment of the fourth Monarchy to the end.[1]

But when we compare together the 13th and 17th chapters of the Apocalypse, we find that in that particular period of history to which St. John's 17th chapter refers a plain distinction is marked between the Beast and his Ten Horns. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings during the same time as the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast."[2] And it is equally evident that a like distinction is made between the Ten-horned Beast and the Image of the Beast in the 13th chapter.

The same political system of Mediæval and Modern Christendom, which consists of a family of kingdoms regarding an Emperor as their head, or at any rate as the highest in rank amongst them, is symbolised in both these chapters. But in the 17th chapter the Great Antichrist of the future is called pre-eminently THE BEAST: that is, the possessor, for the time being, of the Supreme World-power; and in the 13th chapter, which symbolises his first creation, he is called the Image of the Former Beast: that is, the likeness or copy of the Former Beast of ancient Rome.

The Emperor is also symbolised in the prophecy of Daniel as a Horn rising up amongst the Ten, stouter than his fellows, and plucking up three of them by the roots; and it is this mark which enables us to identify with the greatest precision the Beast of St. John with the Fourth Beast of Daniel.

[1] "Daniel autem novissimi regni finem respiciens, id est, novissimos decem reges, in quos dividitur regnum illorum, super quos filius perditionis veniet, cornua dicit decem nasci bestiæ."—Irenæus, i. 784.

[2] Rev. xvii. 12, 13.

The Fourth Beast of Daniel is without doubt the Roman Empire; therefore the Beast of St. John must also be the Roman Empire. But of what age? Must it be the Roman Empire of the first four centuries? Certainly not. This it cannot be, for St. John is distinctly told that the Beast which he describes in the 17th chapter is not the Sixth or then existing development of the world-power, nor even the Seventh, which should succeed it, but the Eighth; "he is the eighth, and is from, out of, or after the seven." And consistently with this, the Apostle sees One of the Heads of the Beast, in the 13th chapter, slain with the sword and healed again.

Who, then, is the historical representative of the Beast during that period of history to which the closing verses of the 17th chapter relate? Who is the representative of That Beast with whom the Ten Kingdoms symbolised by the Ten Horns jointly reign; to whom, after they have destroyed Babylon, they give their power, and strength, and kingdom; and with whom they fight against the Lamb?

Some might suppose the Papacy or the Pope to be so. But this seems improbable, for it involves a contradiction and leads to a great difficulty. If Babylon means Rome, the Beast cannot well represent the same; for, together with his Ten Horns, he destroys Babylon. The Pope will not destroy his Church or City.

It seems likely that, as a righteous punishment for having so allowed Satan to seduce her, the Roman Church will be again persecuted and destroyed by his instruments; that the instruments of her judgment will be the very same nations and princes who for many centuries have supported her; that the Devil, for many centuries only permitted to seduce and corrupt, will towards the end be allowed to deceive into open Apostasy the nations of so-called Christendom, and to lead them to destroy the Roman

Church, and as far as possible every other form of Christianity. And there is reason to believe this because we find the Beast and his Ten Horns represented as first supporting the Woman called Babylon, and then destroying her, and fighting against the Lamb to the very end of the world.

First, the Beast supports the Woman called Babylon, the Harlot. "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." Then, towards the end, the Horns destroy her whom they before supported. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast,[1] these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire."

It is quite consistent with this belief to believe also that those worldly powers whom Satan uses for the destruction of the Roman Church will also wage open war with every form of Christianity, just as the French did during the great Revolution; for Satan hates all Christianity and would never, if unrestrained, allow even the name of Christ to exist. And this the prophecy points out with fearful precision. "The ten horns . . . have one mind and shall give their power and strength to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings."[2]

Let us then return to the question: Who is the historical representative of the Image of the Beast in the 13th chapter, and of The Beast as distinguished from his Ten Horns in the 17th chapter?

We have anticipated the answer in our comparison of

[1] Rev. xvii. 3, 16. According to Bp. Wordsworth's Text from ancient MSS., "and the beast."

[2] Rev. xvii. 13, 14.

the 13th and 17th chapters of the Apocalypse with the vision of Daniel's Fourth Beast.

It seems evident that the Fourth Beast, together with its Horns, revealed to Daniel ; the Ten-horned Beast with the Image of the former Beast described in the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse ; and The Beast with its Horns described in the 17th chapter, personify the same historical idea ; namely, the family of kingdoms already spoken of, and the Emperor, the acknowledged head of those kingdoms, from the time of Charlemagne to the end. It is notorious that in Charlemagne the Roman Empire raised its Eighth Head ; and it is equally notorious that since that time the European princes have acknowledged the Roman Emperor, though often a prince of little real power, as their head, and as the source of all power and honour in Christendom. The remarkable manner in which this power was created purposely to support the Papacy is allegorised in the latter part of the 13th chapter.

First of all the Apostle beholds a symbol which cannot well be mistaken for any one except the Pope ; and then an action is attributed to that symbol which was fulfilled most perfectly in the revival of the Empire of the West in the person of Charlemagne.

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a serpent. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him (in his presence), and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do in sight of the beast." [1]

[1] Rev. xiii. 11–14.

The historical representative of this allegorical symbol is the Bishop of Rome from about the eighth or ninth century.

This symbol is a wild beast, thus resembling the one seen before. And Daniel has fixed the meaning of this symbol, and shown us that a wild beast represents an earthly kingdom. It is notorious that the Pope is not only a Bishop, but also a temporal Prince; and that the Papacy is not only an ecclesiastical power, but also a civil kingdom.

But this Beast has Two Horns like the Horns of a lamb. Horns are the symbols of power; and in the Apocalypse the Lamb is the emblem of Christ, and the Horns of the Lamb are the emblems of the power of Christ. "In the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." [1] The Horns are here evidently the emblems of the Sevenfold Power of the Spirit residing in Christ. Thus, therefore, the Two Horns of this Beast represent a twofold spiritual power, that twofold spiritual power which the Lamb has, as King of kings and Bishop of bishops. It is notorious that the Pope has claimed and exercised this twofold power, asserting that he is the source of all power on earth in things civil and ecclesiastical, the head alike of kings and bishops, as being the representative of Christ on the earth, the vicar of the Lamb.[2]

But although he claims and exercises the powers of the Lamb, he has not His truth and sincerity, he speaks "like a serpent;" "he deceives them which dwell upon

[1] Rev. v. 6.

[2] "For our own part we believe that God is King of kings and Lord of lords, that the Pope is His vicegerent on earth, and that when Pope and Cæsar are in conflict, Cæsar is wrong."—*Brownson's Quarterly Review*, July, 1857.

the earth by false miracles ;" "he exercises all the power of the first beast in his presence ;" he causes men "to worship the first beast."

Here, again, it is notorious that the Pope has deceived mankind with the most awful and groundless falsehoods in doctrine, and with countless fictitious miracles ; and that he has usurped and exercised before the face of the European princes, and even in their own kingdoms and over their own subjects, all their power, all the power, that is, of the Ten-horned Beast, or symbol of the whole World-power. He has released the subjects of princes from their allegiance and placed their kingdoms under an interdict, until, through the power he had over the minds of men, he has brought those princes over to his will. Thus he has "exercised all the power of the first beast (in his very presence) before his face." [1]

Moreover, he has been the chief cause of the gross World-worship of Christians ; he has caused men "to worship the first beast."

[1] "Magnum falsumque prophetam dicit, qui facturus est signa et portenta, et mendacia ante illum in conspectu hominum."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

"De armigero ejus, quem et pseudoprophetam vocat."—Irenæus, lib. iv. c. 28.

"Quod autem ejus cornua agni similia dicit hoc significat, fore ut ille se similem Dei Filio præferat, seque regem exhibeat. Quod sicut draco loquitur, hoc est quod seductor est et non verax."—Hippolytus, *in loc.*

"Agni cornua præfert, quo draconis venena latenter inserat. Quia per hypocrisin sanctitatis, eam quam in se veraciter habuit Dominus, singularem sibi inesse et sapientiam mentitur et vitam. De hac bestia Dominus : Attendite, inquit, a pseudoprophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces."—Bede, *in loc.*

"Hanc bestiam Beda præpositos Ecclesiæ intelligit . . . videtur igitur bestia . . . posterior . . . pontificis Romani imperium . . . sed quando in cornibus regni potestas designatur, per duo cornua similia agni, utramque, et Pontificam et Regiam potestatem, quam sibi

But the remainder of the vision will show us still further, how the Pope has identified himself with this symbol of a Beast with the Two Horns of a Lamb.

This Beast said "to them that dwell on the earth" that they should make an image of the former beast, "which had the wound by the sword and did live;" that is to say, a likeness or copy of the Beast which St. John saw wounded and healed again; an imitation of that head which was wounded by the sword and yet lived again; the reproduction of a power which should resemble the ancient Roman Emperors, whose Empire had indeed been destroyed by the barbarians, but was now becoming again established and consolidated around the ancient Capitol.

It was a very marvellous thing that Rome, the ancient capital of the world, should, after such convulsions, and so many years of confusion and anarchy, have again become the centre and head of the world-power, and should have had again an Emperor with the name and dignity of the Cæsars. Yet so it really was. And this strange thing was brought about through the policy of a Christian Bishop, and his ambitious desire to strengthen his influence in Christendom.

One power in Europe, and one only, has ever fully and exactly fulfilled the prediction of this symbol, and has received from the Pope the name, and dignity, and worship of the FORMER ROMAN EMPERORS.

Let us hear Gibbon describe this act and succession of acts, this power and succession of powers, which jointly exhibited, before the face of all Europe, on the one hand, a most singular usurpation of the powers of the Lamb; and, on the other, a most puerile imitation of departed glory.

Papa usurpat, puto intelligendam. Similia vero agni dicit, siquidem Christi se jactat vicarium;"—Bullinger, *Conc.* p. 56.

"On the festival of Christmas, the last year of the eighth century, Charlemagne appeared in the Church of St. Peter; and, to gratify the vanity of Rome, he had exchanged the simple dress of his country for the habit of a patrician. After the celebration of the holy mysteries, Leo suddenly placed a precious crown on his head, and the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people, 'Long life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, CROWNED BY GOD, the great and pacific Emperor of the Romans!' The head and body of Charlemagne were consecrated by the royal unction: after the example of the Cæsars he was saluted and adored by the Pontiff: his coronation oath represents a promise to maintain the faith and privileges of the Church; and the first-fruits were paid in his rich offerings to the shrine of the Apostle" [1]

So complete was the effect of this ceremony that we find even the Greek Emperors, although they rejected that of his successors, acknowledging the title of Charlemagne. "During the short union of virtue and power, they," that is, the Greeks, "respectfully saluted the august Charlemagne with the acclamations of Basileus, and Emperor of the Romans." [2] "The Imperial dignity of Charlemagne was announced to the East by the alteration of his style; and, instead of saluting his fathers, the Greek Emperors, he presumed to adopt the more equal and familiar appellation of brother."

The same writer relates, in the same chapter, the continuation of this political farce.

"At the head of a victorious army, he (Otho) [3] passed

[1] Gibbon, c. xlix. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Robertson says of Otho: "Elated with his success, he assumed the title of Cæsar Augustus. A Prince born in the heart of Germany pretended to be the successor of the Emperors of ancient Rome, and claimed a right to the same power and prerogative."—*Charles V.* 207.

the Alps, subdued the kingdom of Italy, delivered the Pope, and for ever fixed the Imperial crown in the name and nation of Germany. From that memorable era, two maxims of public jurisprudence were introduced by force and ratified by time : 1. That the prince who was elected in the German Diet acquired from that instant the subject kingdoms of Italy and Rome. 2. But that he might not legally assume the titles of Emperor and Augustus till he had received the Crown from the hands of the Roman Pontiff."

Until, that is, the Two-horned Beast had given him life, and made him a Living Image of the ancient Roman Emperors.

A farce, in many respects similar to this, was enacted when Napoleon crowned himself as the successor of Charlemagne, in the presence of the Pope, and after receiving his benediction. "After taking the oath prescribed by the Senatus Consultum of 18th May, 1804, and receiving the Papal benediction, the Emperor, with his own hands, took the crown and placed it on his head."[1] Nor was this the last occasion on which a descendant of Rome's conquerors attempted to mimic the imperial greatness which they so utterly destroyed.[2]

Napoleon III. certainly did so, and took great pains to represent himself as the successor of his uncle, and so as a member of that Imperial Dynasty which was commenced by Charlemagne ; one of the imitators of the dignity of the

[1] Alison, c. xxxviii.

[2] "At the commencement of that career which has only just ended (the career of Wellington), there was an Empire of a thousand years' renown which styled itself the Empire of the Cæsars . . . the great Duke witnessed the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire."—*The Times*, Sept. 17, 1852.

ancient Roman Cæsars.[1] But another arose in Christendom to take his place. The King of Prussia almost literally took the Imperial crown from the head of Napoleon III. and placed it on his own, even in the fallen Emperor's very palace. He assumed that name and dignity of Cæsar, copied from ancient Rome, which gives him a nominal precedence before all the other kings and princes of Western Christendom.

The Germans evidently regarded this transaction as the restoration of that Empire which was destroyed by Napoleon I.; for the Prussian correspondent of "The Times" of January 25, 1871, wrote thus: "Ever since the German Unity movement arose out of the wars against Napoleon I., the re-establishment of the Imperial Dignity has been a dream dear to the nation's heart." And he calls it "the re-institution of the title, once the grandest in Christendom . . . . their beloved and at last accomplished ideal."

The fact that there are others bearing the title of Emperor, and that the Eastern Church, too, has her Cæsar, renders the system of Modern Christendom even a more perfect imitation, so far as the Imperial title is concerned, of the ancient Roman Empire. And by Christendom, throughout this volume, the author means every part of the world in which any form of Christianity exists. The expression is used to embrace not only the Latin, but also the Greek Church, and the communions which have separated from them; as well as those

[1] It is notorious that he desired, above all things, the Papal coronation, and so to keep before the eyes of his subjects the Pope-created Emperor of the West.

"The Roman Empire, of which the French Empire is a professed imitation, and which it in some respects really resembles."—*Saturday Review*, Jan. 30, 1858.

Christian nations which have sprung up, and are yet, perhaps, to spring up on lands whose very existence was unknown in the days of our forefathers. It is natural, however, that our attention should be mainly occupied by Western Christendom, of which America may now be fairly considered an important part; and it was to be expected that Christian prophecy would dwell principally on those nations of Christendom which occupy the most prominent position in the world. The people of the whole world are becoming every day better acquainted one with another, and there is every reason to hope that the confines of Christendom may soon be greatly extended, through the enormous influence of the Western nations. Indeed our Saviour's words would lead us to expect this before the end comes; that all may be brought within the reach of the Gospel, even if they will not accept it. "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [1]

The modern Emperors and their successors may be wise and useful rulers; but it does not follow from this that they should not be the historical representatives, in their generation, of the "image of the beast," the image in modern history of the Imperial title and dignity of ancient Rome, which began with Charlemagne, and has continued ever since to form a part of the European system of government.

The time has not yet come for the open hostility of The Beast. We are living in that period during which the Western or Roman Church is still in a measure the established religion of the World-power in Europe, a state of things predicted in the Apocalypse under the symbol of a Woman sitting upon a Beast: that is, supported by it.

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 14.

There are ominous signs that her supporters are falling from her, and there is every reason to fear that before many generations have passed by, the kings of the earth united under the Antichrist of their day will not only become the bitter enemies of the corrupt Church, but will also prevail to silence for a time the testimony of her faithful members, and to slay the Witnesses of the latter days. The probability of this result will be better seen when we come to consider the predicted Fall and Judgment of Babylon. At present it will be necessary to consider some further particulars connected with the Image of the Beast.

This Image of ancient Rome has been literally worshipped in Europe; and the Pope and Emperor have set their "mark"[1] of slavery upon all the inhabitants of the nations under their power, allowing none even to buy or sell without that mark.

Gibbon writes at considerable length on this subject. A few passages may be very fitly quoted in this place.

"From this humiliating scene let us turn to the same

[1] The ψῆφος with its ὄνομα καινὸν and τοῦ Θεοῦ is contrasted with the ἀριθμὸς with its ὄνομα τοῦ Θηρίου. The conjecture of Irenæus, founded upon the fact that Rome was then the great persecutor, has been shown to be correct by the history of mediæval and modern Christendom, in which the Western or Latin Empire has played so conspicuous a part. His words concerning the number of the beast are, "Λατεῖνος nomen habet sexcentorum sexaginta numerum; et valde verisimile est, quoniam novissimum regnum hoc habet vocabulum. Latini enim sunt qui nunc regnant."—Irenæus, lib. v. c. xxx.

"Ὥσπερ γάρ ἐστι νομίσματα δύο, ὃ μὲν Θεοῦ, ὃ δὲ κόσμου, καί ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα ἐπικείμενον ἔχει, οἱ ἄπιστοι τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, οἱ δὲ πιστοὶ ἐν ἀγάπῃ χαρακτῆρα Θεοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ."—*S. Ignatius ad Magnesianos, c. v.*

The servants of Christ, in short, throughout this Allegory, are marked with the name and seal of God: the worshippers of the world, with the mark and name and number of the Beast.

Charles in the diets of the Empire. The Golden Bull, which fixes the Germanic constitution, is promulgated in the style of a sovereign and legislator. A hundred princes bowed before his throne, and exalted their own dignity by the voluntary honours which they yielded to their chief or minister."[1] "Nor was the supremacy of the Emperor confined to Germany alone: the hereditary monarchs of Europe confessed the pre-eminence of his rank and dignity: he was the first of the Christian princes, the temporal head of THE GREAT REPUBLIC OF THE WEST: to his person the title of Majesty was long appropriated; and he disputed with the Pope the sublime prerogative of creating kings and assembling councils. The oracle of the civil law, the learned Bartolus, was a pensioner of Charles the Fourth; and his school resounded with the doctrine that the Roman Emperor was the rightful sovereign of the earth, from the rising to the setting sun. The contrary opinion was condemned, not as an error, but as heresy, since even the Gospel had pronounced, 'And there went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.'" He then goes on to draw a "contrast between the two Cæsars; the Bohemian, who concealed his weakness under the mask of ostentation; and the Roman, who disguised his strength under the semblance of modesty."

The unjustifiable and wicked practices of propagating religion by the sword, and of punishing heretics (that is, very often those persons who could not bring themselves to accept the false doctrines of Rome) with death or civil disabilities, are no less clearly related by Gibbon and other historians.

Concerning Charlemagne's conduct in this respect, Gibbon writes, in his 49th chapter: "The north of Germany, from the Rhine and beyond the Elbe, was still

[1] Chap. lxix.

hostile and pagan ; nor was it till after a war of thirty-three years that the Saxons bowed under the yoke of Christ and of Charlemagne." "The religion and humanity of the children atoned, in some degree, for the massacre of the parents." In the same chapter we read : "The four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded on the same spot would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne. His treatment of the vanquished Saxons was an abuse of the right of conquest ; his LAWS were not less sanguinary than his arms." In a note on this passage he says, "Besides the massacres and transmigrations, the pain of death was pronounced against the following crimes :—1. The refusal of Baptism. 2. The false pretence of Baptism. 3. A relapse into Idolatry. 4. The murder of a Priest or Bishop. 5. Human Sacrifices. 6. Eating meat in Lent. But every crime might be expiated by Baptism or PENANCE." Here we have a refusal of compulsory baptism and the eating meat in Lent placed on the same footing with the sins of murder and of human sacrifice.

Of Otho he writes to the same effect : "In the north, Christianity was propagated by the sword of Otho, the conqueror and Apostle of the Slavic nations of the Elbe and Oder."

The forbidding to buy or sell, the imposition of civil disabilities on all who would not, in every particular of doctrine and discipline, submit to the Bishop of Rome and his creatures, was merely a continuance of a corrupt and wicked ecclesiastical practice already adopted. This corruption was introduced as early as the period of the Second Seal or Red Horse, although, like all other errors, it increased in flagrancy and violence, in proportion to the growth of ecclesiastical usurpation. Thus Bingham[1]

[1] Bk. xvi. c. vi. § 6.

shows that the punishment of DEATH for HERESY was rendered LEGAL by Theodosius, as early as the year 382. And he mentions among the laws made against them, that "the Montanists, Donatists, and all that were re-baptised by them, were deprived of the right of contracting, buying, and selling;" "all commerce was forbidden to be held with them." They were deprived "of all offices of profit and dignity;" "they were rendered intestate: that is, they were unqualified either to dispose of their estates by will, or receive estates from others;" "the right of giving or receiving donations was denied them;" "pecuniary mulcts and fines were imposed upon them;" "they were proscribed, transported, and banished;" "they were also in many cases subjected to corporal punishment, scourging, &c., before they were sent into banishment." "Finally, in some special cases, they were terrified by sanguinary laws, which made them liable to death, though by the connivance of the princes, or the intercession of the Church, they were rarely put in execution against them. Gothofred says the first law of this kind was made by Theodosius, anno 382, against the Encratites."

Such were the enactments which Bingham calls "the laws of the state made against heretics and schismatics by the Christian Emperors from the time of Constantine, chiefly comprised under one title, *de hæreticis*, in the Theodosian code."

Now, without being supposed in any way to commend or justify real heretics, or to support their false tenets, we may without fear, with the Gospel in our hands, condemn with unqualified censure the enactment of such laws; praising only the unwillingness with which the Church at first put, or saw them put, in execution. She may well have been scared at first, to find her self-imposed rulers placing in her hand that Sword concerning which Our Saviour said, "All they that take the sword shall perish

with the sword." Not so, however, the Bishop of Rome, in the ninth and following centuries, when his Lamb-like Horns had come to their full strength; when the inhabitants of the earth had made, and his own hands and mouth had given life to, an Image of those Emperors who first imbued a Christian sword with blood, and legalised the infliction of civil disabilities and death on heretics; on all who (whether rightly or wrongly, it matters comparatively little to the present purpose) dissented from the doctrines of the Catholic Church as understood by the Powers Ecclesiastical and Civil then dominant and supreme.

Concerning the same system, Mosheim writes,[1] "The other maxim, relating to the justice and expediency of punishing error, was introduced with those serene and peaceful times which the accession of Constantine to the Imperial Throne procured to the Church. It was from that period approved by many, enforced by several examples during the contests that arose with the Priscillianists and Donatists, confirmed and established by the authority of Augustin, and thus transmitted to the following ages."

This maxim, introduced thus early, has, as we have good reason to know, been always more or less supported and acted upon by the Pope and the instruments of his tyranny. Speaking of the Albigenses (the correctness or incorrectness of whose opinions does not materially affect the present question), Gibbon writes,[2] "It was in cruelty alone that her (Theodora's) soldiers could equal the heroes of the crusades, and the cruelty of her priests was far excelled by the founders of the Inquisition." "The visible assemblies of the Paulicians, or Albigeois, were extirpated by fire and sword; and the bleeding remnant escaped by flight, concealment, or Catholic conformity."

The following passages also confirm the interpretation

[1] Cent. iv. part 2, c. 3. [2] Chap. 54.

above suggested of the symbols of this chapter: namely, of the Ten-horned Beast, the Beast with Lamb's Horns, and the Image of the First Beast :—

"The power and influence of the pontiffs, in civil affairs, arose in a short time to an enormous height through the favour and protection of the princes, in whose cause they had employed the influence which superstition had given them over the minds of the people. The increase of their authority in religious matters was not less rapid, nor less considerable, and it arose from the same causes. The wisest and most impartial among the Roman Catholic writers not only acknowledge, but are even at pains to demonstrate, that from the time of Lewis the Meek, the ancient rules of ecclesiastical government were gradually changed in Europe by the counsels and instigation of the Court of Rome, and new laws substituted in their place. The European princes suffered themselves to be divested of the supreme authority in religious matters, which they had derived from Charlemagne; the power of the bishops was greatly diminished, and even the authority of both Provincial and General Councils began to decline. The Roman Pontiffs, elated with their overgrown prosperity, and become arrogant, beyond measure, by the daily accessions that were made to their authority, were eagerly bent upon persuading all, and had, indeed, the good fortune to persuade many, that the Bishop of Rome was constituted and appointed by Jesus Christ" (by the Lamb) "supreme legislator and judge of the Church Universal." [1]

"In the first ages of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, our eye is invariably fixed on the royal city, which had given laws to the fairest portion of the globe. We contemplate her fortunes, at first with admiration, at length with pity, always with attention; and when that attention

[1] Mosheim, cent. ix. part 2, c. 2, sect. 7.

is diverted from the Capitol to the provinces, they are considered as so many branches which have been successively severed from the Imperial trunk. In the eighth century of the Christian era, a religious quarrel, the worship of images, provoked the Romans to assert their independence; their Bishop became the temporal as well as the spiritual father of a free people; and of the Western Empire, which was restored by Charlemagne, the title and IMAGE still decorate the singular constitution of modern Germany."[1] "In the beginning of the twelfth century, the era of the first crusade, Rome was revered by the Latins, as the metropolis of the world, as the throne of the Pope and the Emperor, who, from the eternal city, derived their title, their honours, and the right or exercise of temporal dominion." Thus did the Two-horned Beast "cause the earth and them which dwelt therein to worship the First Beast, whose deadly wound was healed." And thus also did he give life to an Image of the First Beast. "The successors of Charlemagne and the Othos were chosen beyond the Rhine in a national diet;" "were made by them that dwell on the earth;" "but these princes were content with the humble names of Kings of Germany and Italy, till they had passed the Alps and the Apennines to seek their Imperial Crown on the banks of the Tiber." "In the Church of St. Peter, the coronation was performed by his successor; the voice of God was confounded with that of the people; and the public consent was declared in the acclamations of 'Long life and victory to our Lord the Pope! Long life and victory to our Lord the Emperor! Long life and victory to the Roman and Teutonic armies!'

[1] This title and image again in our day, as we have seen, decorate the constitution of re-united Germany. And they will doubtless be assumed by many more rulers whom from time to time the convulsions of Christendom will bring up to the surface in the ages yet to come.

The names of Cæsar and Augustus, the Laws of Constantine and Justinian, the example of Charlemagne and Otho, established the supreme dominion of the Emperors ; their title and image was engraved on the Papal coins ; and their jurisdiction was marked by the sword of justice, which they delivered to the Prefect of the city."[1]

And thus history, as we have seen in a previous chapter, clearly supports this view, that the Ten-horned Beast is the Roman Empire, existing, even after its apparent destruction, in its divided Kingdoms, all, for a long period, regarding Rome as their capital ; the "partly strong, partly broken kingdom" of Daniel ; the partly united, partly divided European empire.

It shows us also, not by one but by many characteristic marks, appearing in one and only One Power in Europe, that the Pope is the true and full antitype of the Beast with Two Horns like those of a Lamb.

And, lastly, it informs us that the Imperial Dynasty—which Charlemagne founded, the Pope consecrated, the kings of Europe worshipped, and historians call the "Revived Western Empire," "the title and IMAGE of the Western Empire"—alone but most exactly answers St. John's description of the third of the symbols we have been considering : the "Image of the Beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live."[2]

[1] Gibbon, chap. 69.

[2] Certissimum illud est, et communi omnium historicorum consensu testatissimum, in Carolo Magno, Leonis III. pontificis opera reparatum esse imperium collapsum in occidente ; atque ita Imaginem Bestiæ, id est Imperii Romani, excitatum esse."—Bullinger, *Conc. in Apoc.* xl.

"In this vision we have a plain account of the rise of the new Empire of Charlemagne, A.D. 800. . . . It is a resemblance or picture of the Roman Empire, when it was under the old Roman Cæsars, which had received the mortal wound by the barbarous nations."—*Whiston's Essay on Rev.*, Camb., 1706.

We have, then, in the 13th Chapter of the Apocalypse, an allegorical representation of the Powers of Christendom, from about the age of Charlemagne to the time of their destruction.

Mediæval Christendom consisted of a family of independent nations, the Head of which family was the Emperor, who was chosen by some of the Princes of Europe and then crowned by the Pope.

This system of the World-power is fitly allegorised by three symbols. First, we have a Ten-horned Beast, with Crowns on his Horns, representing the same historical idea as those personifications of the World-power in all ages described in the visions of Daniel; but representing this World-power at that particular time when the Ten Horns had been developed in history, and with particular reference to those divided Kingdoms represented by the Horns.

Then, secondly, we have the Pope represented by the intelligible symbol of a Beast with Two Horns of a Lamb; an emblem unknown to Daniel, whose visions related only to the World-power.

And, thirdly, we have the sovereignty of "The Revived Empire of the West," "The Image of the Western Empire," the new "Empire of the Cæsars," "The Holy Roman Empire," which commenced with Charlemagne, lasted a thousand years, was then violently seized by Napoleon I., was held by him who claimed to be the third Napoleon, and was then assumed by the King of Prussia, and will, doubtless, be held by many Future Conquerors; we have this Head of the modern World-power represented by an Image of the Beast which St. John saw wounded, an imitation of that Head of the World-power which was overthrown by the Barbarian Sword, a copy of the Ancient Roman Emperors.

But it may be objected that the Little Horn of Daniel,

and the Ten-horned Beast and his Image as described in the Apocalypse, are evidently the open and violent enemies of the Lamb. How can this be asserted of any powers in Christendom?

This question has been already partly answered, and will be answered more at length in another chapter. It will be sufficient to observe again here that the World-power is represented in the visions of St. John as for many ages supporting a corrupt, idolatrous, and persecuting Church; and then, as destroying this Church and fighting openly against the Lamb. Thus, throughout all that period of the world's history, allegorised in the 13th and 17th chapters of the Revelation, the Rulers of this world are represented as the opponents of Christ, but His more open and more violent opponents towards the close of their career, and therefore at a time as yet future.

If the interpretation here suggested is correct, which time alone can prove, there is reason to fear that the WORLD-POWER, either bearing the Rome-borrowed title of Emperor, or at any rate imitating Rome's lust of dominion, will in the end turn against the Church and succeed in silencing her testimony, in slaying the Two Witnesses. And then, "They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."[1]

[1] Rev. xi. 10.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLAGUES OF WORLD-WORSHIPPERS

THE visions of the 14th chapter come before the imagination as the sunshine after a tempest, as the dawn of morning after the gloom of night. We have been straining our eyes to catch a glimpse of light in the darkness. We have, as it were, been standing "upon the sand of the sea," where "the four winds of heaven" have been striving together to overwhelm the Ark of Salvation in the billows of this world's ocean. We have gazed through the universal gloom at that frail and storm-tossed bark, which contains all we love in earth or in heaven. The fearful question has arisen : Can she weather the storm ? [1]

Now the first vision of the 14th chapter fully answers this question. As of old, in spite of the corruptions of the times, in spite of the world-worship of all Christendom, God has many thousands that have not kneeled to Baal, and many lips that have not kissed him ; there is a little flock who, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, shall fear no evil ; there are those who shall hear the warning voices of Scripture, and, when they see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, shall escape with joy unto the mountains.[2]

[1] "Mare vero mundus, in quo Ecclesia, velut pelagi salo, fluctibus jactatur, nec tamen naufragio perit."—*Hippolytus de Antichristo.*

[2] Who shall avoid antichristian errors? "Multi, qui audiunt

The Apostle beholds again a vision of the Saints in rest; those blessed ones who have kept unpolluted the seal of God upon their foreheads, who have loved Him better than their life, and who at last by a faithful death have been taken up to God and His throne. "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."[1] These are those sealed ones whom we saw in the 7th chapter, the elect of Israel and with them the countless multitudes of the Gentile Church.

For Our Saviour foretold that the blessings of His Gospel should not be confined to His earlier Saints, the faithful remnant of Israel, the firstfruits of redemption here spoken of; He said, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."[2]

To the end of the world, therefore, the faithful portion of the visible Church shall weather all the storms which Satan can stir up against them; the Gospel shall be a witness and warning to all the wicked and an eternal blessing to the righteous; and especially as the end approaches the voice of warning shall sound clearer and louder, though few, it is to be feared, will hearken to it. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"[3] "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."[4]

But if there be little love there shall be abundant light, and full opportunity of loving for all who will avoid the iniquity, who will come out of the accursed city. The

Scripturas Divinas, eas in manibus habebunt, mente versabunt, imposturam illius evitabunt. Clare enim perspicient insidias ejus, et imposturæ arrogantiam; effugientque e manibus ejus ad montes."—*Hip. de Antichristo.*

[1] Rev. xiv. [2] St. Matt. xxiv. 14.
[3] St. Luke xviii. 8. [4] St. Matt. xxiv. 12.

following visions clearly manifest this. The first shows how universal shall be the light, how plainly spoken the warning; the second exhibits no less clearly the fearful punishments of all who will not hearken, and the blessings of those who are faithful.

The first vision manifests the universality of light and warning up to the very end. "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." [1]

The second vision reveals the fall of the idolatrous city, the eternal punishment of all world-worshipping Christians, and the blessedness of all those who "die the death of the righteous."

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, that great city . . . . And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast . . . . he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb . . . . Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus . . . . Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." [2]

The two following visions require no explanation. They are simply Allegorical descriptions of the Last Judgment. The final judgment of the world is represented in the first under the symbol of a great harvest, and in the second under the emblem of a vintage. When "the harvest of the earth was ripe;" when both the wheat and tares had come to maturity, "he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle

[1] Rev. xiv. 6, 7. [2] Rev. xiv. 8–13.

on the earth; and the earth was reaped." And when "her grapes were fully ripe . . . . the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bits of the horses for sixteen hundred furlongs." [1]

The depth of the blood-stream indicates the thoroughness and appalling character of the last Judgment; and the number of furlongs its extent and universality. All through this prophecy the number four, with its multiples, symbolises universality; just as seven implies perfection and completeness. Thus we have the four angels, the four corners of the earth, the four winds, the 144,000 of the elect of Israel, sealed with the Father's name; and so here the blood of the slain flowing for four times four hundred furlongs.

We may therefore pass on at once, from these easy and intelligible visions of the 14th chapter, to the examination of the more difficult Allegories described in those which follow.

In the 15th and 16th chapters the Apostle describes another scene which moved before his eyes, a Vision of Judgment.

The Allegorical Drama had in the 13th chapter represented to the Seer's imagination, by various symbols, the World-power, drawing to itself by the assistance of an ecclesiastical Hierarchy the worship of Christendom. He had seen how all men wondered to perceive the Beast, who had been slain, coming to life again, and an Image of his ancient glory restored. Mankind were astonished to find the powers of the world becoming again consolidated around the ancient Capital of the Empire and a new

[1] Rev. xiv. 14–20.

Dynasty of Cæsars claiming the homage of a family of independent princes. But he had also seen that the servants of Jesus had no cause to rejoice at this event. The world might rejoice at it; but they must weep and lament. For "it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." With what saints? With "the remnant of the woman's seed;" with those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ;" with those "Two Witnesses" to whom it was given to "prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth;" in plainer words, with all true and faithful Christians.

It was given to him, first, "to make war" with these, then "to overcome them." First he is "to make war" with them. We naturally ask, how long? And an answer is given us. All the time that the visible Church is in the power of worldly rulers. For "the holy city shall they tread underfoot forty and two months;" and "power was given unto him to make war forty and two months:" all the time that the true witnesses of Christ bear their testimony in sorrow and despair at the general corruption of the Church. For "they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." All the time that the Faithful Woman, or, in plainer words, the true Church which God knoweth and not man, the 7,000 who have not worshipped Baal, is supported in the wilderness of the world by the Providential arrangements of God; for "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days:" "where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Or, to refer to the prophecies of Daniel, the Beast shall continue this desolating warfare as long as the power of the Little Horn over the saints

continues, for "they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time,"[1] and as long as the Sanctuary is polluted, as long as the Holy City is trodden underfoot by the abomination of desolation, for "from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."[2]

During all this time, then, a period commonly interpreted to mean 1,260 years, the Beast or World-power receives the worship of nominal Christians, but makes war with the true Witnesses of Jesus. In every age of the Church's history, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;"[3] and the same Apostle who wrote this prophecy wrote also the following awful words: "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world" (worship the beast) . . . "the love of the Father is not in him."[4] "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."[5]

But during the continuance of this warfare many shall "resist unto blood, striving against sin;"[6] and they shall enter at once into a state of rest and peace; for "white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled;"[7] in plainer words, until the Beast should have power, not only to make war with the Saints, but also to overcome them.

[1] Dan. vii. 25. [2] Dan. xii. 11. [3] St. James iv. 4.
[4] 1 John ii. 15. [5] Rev. xiv. 9, 10. [6] Heb. xii. 4. [7] Rev. vi. 11.

Thus we see with what Saints and during what period of time the Beast is permitted to make war. But we have seen also that during this time he has not been permitted to overcome them. He slays many of them indeed, but he may not silence the voice of their testimony, or avoid being tormented by it.

Then comes the fearful time, a time yet future, when he will have power given him "to overcome them." For we read, "when they shall have finished their testimony" (which lasts 1,260 days) "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." [1]

This state of almost universal world-worship, then, having been allegorised in the 13th chapter, the 15th and 16th chapters describe in very general terms and in highly figurative language the judgments which God inflicts upon the kingdom of the Beast and all who worship him; [2] or, in plainer words, the evil consequences which result from the world-worship of the visible Church, which are in truth the providential and judicial consequences of that "friendship of the world which is enmity with God."

The Apostle sees Seven Angels holding in their hands "the Seven Last Plagues," symbolised by "seven golden vials (or dishes) full of the wrath of God." In anticipation of the victory which the saints should afterwards obtain over the world, and in allusion to that joyful day when Moses and the Israelites praised God for their deliverance out of Egypt, effected by the plagues which fell on the Egyptians, and by the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea; all those "who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the

[1] Rev. xi. 7.

[2] "Hos Archangelos magnos septem ad percutiendum regnum Antichristi mittet."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

number of his name," are represented as standing upon the shore of the glassy sea, with harps in their hands; "and they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." [1]

But for this joyful time, the time of the cleansing of the Sanctuary, of which Daniel speaks, the Saints must wait in patience until every one of the Seven Vials of Wrath has been poured out upon the beast and all belonging to him. For "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the Seven Plagues of the Seven Angels were fulfilled." [2]

The Seven Angels then stand ready, "clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four animals gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever." [3]

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." [4]

Now we have here almost a literal description of the Sixth Plague of Egypt, the plague of boils. Moses sprinkled the ashes of the furnace towards heaven and it became "dust upon all the land of Egypt" (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου), "a boil . . . upon man and upon beast." The word in the Septuagint is ἕλκη, boils, the plural of the word used here by St. John and translated "a sore." Just so the

[1] Rev. xv. 1–4. [2] Rev. xv. 8. [3] Rev. xv. 6, 7. [4] Rev. xvi. 2.

Angel scatters the contents of his Vial ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, upon the land. We naturally ask, upon what land? Let Holy Scripture explain itself. Upon the land of Egypt, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν Αἰγύπτου. That is to say, not literally upon ancient Egypt, but upon the Kingdom of that Modern Pharaoh who oppresses the faithful sons of God, whom, as of old, God calls out of Egypt; "Out of Egypt have I called my son:" upon that "great city which spiritually is called Sodom and EGYPT, where also our Lord was crucified."[1] In plainer words, upon corrupt Christendom, the antitype of that Jerusalem which killed the Just One; not of that "Jerusalem which is above," which is the mother of all God's Saints.

Upon this figurative EGYPT[2] the Angel scatters the contents of his Vial, and they become "a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which have the mark of the beast, and upon them which worship his image;" they become the evident tokens of the wrath and indignation of God upon the slaves of the world and all who worship it.

But it cannot be imagined that literal sores on the bodies of men are here intended. St. John saw literal sores upon the bodies of the actors in the Allegory. But those sores allegorise some peculiar effects of God's displeasure far worse than any bodily diseases. From a comparison of this passage with other Scriptures, we may safely conclude that tormenting diseases of the soul are here meant, and those moral vices into which the worshippers of the powers of this world are led by Satan.[3]

[1] Rev. xi. 8.

[2] "Si quis autem diligentius intendat his, quæ a prophetis dicuntur de fine, et quæcunque Joannes discipulus Domini vidit in Apocalypsi, inveniet easdem plagas universaliter accipere gentes, quas tunc particulatim accepit Ægyptus."—Irenæus, i. 661.

[3] "Qui Domino derelicto diabolum venerantur, ejusdem impietatis vulnere pessimo spiritualiter interibunt."—Bede, *in loc.*

We find the plagues of Egypt, and especially this plague of boils, made the types of those judgments which should fall upon the Jews for their apostasy, and therefore used in a figurative sense for any kind of judgment. Moses says, "The Lord will smite thee with the boil of Egypt . . . whereof thou canst not be healed."[1] The words in the Septuagint are ἐν ἕλκει Αἰγυπτίῳ, with the Egyptian boil.

Bodily diseases are the common emblems of sin, the deadly disease of the soul, tormenting all those who are not healed by the Heavenly Physician. "My wounds stink and are corrupt," says the Psalmist; "my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh."[2] He explains the nature of his disease in a previous verse. "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin;" on which words Bishop Horne writes thus: "The expressions in this verse are applicable to the disorders and diseases which sin hath introduced into the soul and into the body, as the terms 'health' and 'sickness' are in Scripture no less frequently employed to describe the state of the former than that of the latter."

These Sores, then, are the Moral Corruptions of all who worship the Beast or World-power, and who are marked by him as his slaves. They are the avenging furies which a jealous God has sent to haunt the consciences of the worldly-minded, who love His Rival, the World, better than Him. "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore." "The arrows and hand of God are His judgments on sin; those internal pangs and terrors which pierce the soul, and those external afflictions and calamities which sink and weigh down the spirits."[3]

The Gospel is a message of peace with God, with our

[1] Deut. xxviii. 27. [2] Psalm xxxviii. 5, 7.
[3] Horne on Psalm xxxviii. 2.

neighbour, and with our own souls. And when the motives and principles of the Gospel have been taken into a man's soul and made the motives and principles of all his thoughts and actions, he is fortified alike against the external torments and diseases of the body, and against all those more formidable pangs and terrors of the conscience, those arrows in the hand of an offended God, those sores which run in the night season and cease not, which hinder the soul from receiving comfort. The Faithful Witness of Christ realises the words of the Apostle, and though outwardly perhaps "sorrowful," is nevertheless inwardly always "rejoicing." But let a man once become a worshipper of the Beast, a lover of this world, one of those who adopt the maxims of worldly policy and truckle to those in power, and peace and health are henceforth far from him. His are the curses and not the blessings which are written in this book. On him shall fall at least this judgment. The boil of Egypt shall cling to him. "His bones shall be full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the grave."[1]

Such, then, is the spiritual meaning of this passage, describing the First Judgment which falls upon the subjects of the Modern Pharaohs, the sinners of Christendom, who oppress the faithful Witnesses of Jesus and assist in corrupting the doctrines of His Gospel. We see that, as in all the other visions of this book, there is here also a deep, practical, and spiritual lesson for Christians in every age of the world's history.

Similar figures were used by the ancient prophets in their indignant remonstrances with the Jewish people.

"Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherd feed the flocks? . . . .

[1] Job xx. 11.

The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick." [1]

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." [2]

And so it was in Christendom when all men began to Worship the Beast. Christians were once conspicuous for holiness, piety, justice, and enduring charity. But when they began to worship the powers of this world the medicines of the Gospel could no longer counteract the evil tendencies of a corrupt nature, which soon showed itself in those loathsome vices which are at once the sins and the torments of all who forget God. The whole body of society, no less than the bodies of its individual members, became covered with the sores of the First Vial of God's wrath. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there was no soundness in them; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores."

But the Boil of Egypt, which fell indeed on all the subjects of Pharaoh, is said expressly to have been upon the Magicians of Egypt who opposed Moses. These Magicians, or workers of secret signs, as the word signifies in Hebrew, were the supporters of the corrupt religion of Egypt. And Moses, whom they opposed, was a Type of those faithful Witnesses mentioned in the Apocalypse. How natural it is, then, that the language of this First Judgment should be taken from the description of the Sixth Plague of Egypt, which specially mentions the workers of secret signs. For on whom did the judgment of the First Vial fall most severely? What Christians were, in the Middle Ages, most deformed with the sores of moral vice and the torments of an evil conscience?

[1] Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 4. [2] Isaiah i. 6.

Those magicians, those jugglers, who withstood the representatives of Moses, the faithful few who dared to bear witness to the truth, and were tortured for so doing, not accepting deliverance; those magicians of modern Egypt who worked their secret miracles, their mere juggling tricks, in the eyes of the common people, to harden the heart of the Modern Pharaohs of Christendom![1] The Head of them all, the Archimagus of the Apocalypse, the Beast with Lamb's Horns and the words of a Serpent, was the Bishop of Rome for the time being, who makes no secret but even boasts of the lying miracles of the Middle Ages, who even now causes the blood of dead men to boil before the people, who "doeth great wonders . . . . in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he has power to do in the sight of the beast."[2]

And if the Bishop of Rome has been the Head of these deluded men, if he has been the ringleader in this conspiracy to rob God of His honour, the prime mover and supporter of the world-worship of the Church; on him too have fallen in abundance the ashes of the furnace of the wrath of God, those deforming moral vices, those boils which fell upon the magicians and people of Egypt, the noisome and grievous sores which fell upon the men which had the Mark of the Beast, and upon them which worshipped his Image.

The judgment of the Second Vial is but the necessary consequence of all this. "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea: and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea."[3]

This judgment is the necessary and fearful result of the

[1] "C'est le temps des plus grands abus . . . . du plus grand désordre de mœurs parmi les prêtres."—Guizot, *Civ. Eur.* p. 183.

[2] Rev. xiii. 12–14. [3] Rev. xvi. 3.

former. If Christians worship the powers of the world instead of God: if those who ought to feed the flock of Christ do this also: and, especially, if he who claims to be in every sense the Vicar of the Lamb becomes a worker and abettor of lying miracles wrought to support world-worship; the chief Magician of Pharaoh's court instead of the faithful leader, the Moses of God's people; what must be the consequences upon the masses of the people here represented by "the sea"?

A very appalling, but, by the light of Scripture, not unintelligible picture is here presented to the imagination. The whole sea is changed into the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in it perishes. This happened literally in ancient Egypt, but figuratively in that Kingdom of the Apocalypse which "spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt," where the Pharaohs of worldly power are worshipped, the Witnesses of Christ not listened to, and Christ Himself crucified afresh and put to an open shame.

The waters of the sea, which commonly represent the masses of the people, are left, in consequence of the world-worship of the Church, in a state of spiritual death; or rather, when they are beginning to be converted, they are allowed to fall back again into a state of wickedness. Even if they are taught the doctrines of the Gospel, they are taught them in such a manner, with so many admixtures of falsehood, and with such examples of world-worship before them, that many of those who were alive become spiritually dead.

This vision may be illustrated by the figurative language of Ezekiel. He compares the healing doctrines of truth, and their gradual spread in the world, to a stream flowing from the house of God, giving life, in its passage, to every tree, and at length entering into the sea and healing its waters. "These waters . . . go down into the sea: which

being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live . . . they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh. . . . But the miry places thereof and marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." [1]

The exact opposite to this is represented by a similar and even stronger figure in the vision of the Second Vial. The sea, which ought to have been healed, and which had been partly healed, was brought into even a worse state of corruption than it was before. Those masses of the people which the Church ought to have enlightened and sanctified were, through the neglect of Christian teachers and their shameful world-worship, reduced to a state of the greatest darkness and corruption. Ezekiel represents a portion of the world as still excluded from the blessings of the Gospel, and compares it to the "miry places" and "marshes" which should "not be healed," but "given up to salt." But St. John sees a far more awful scene. The whole sea is turned into the blood of a dead man.

What powerful imagery! What an appalling picture! What a sickening spectacle! Yet the imagery is not overwrought. The fearful reality is worse than the picture. The blood of millions of lost souls crieth from the ground, even in these days, against the sensual, covetous, and world-worshipping rulers of the Church and the State.

Again, Ezekiel compares the souls converted by the Gospel to a multitude of fishes enlivened by the waters which flowed from the house of God. "There shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh." [2]

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 1–12. [2] Ezek. xlvii. 9.

But in the vision of the Second Vial, when the sea is turned into blood, every living creature dies. Many fishes indeed perished in the vision of the Second Trumpet, which describes the fall of ancient Rome, and its consequences. But there the evil was far less universal. "The third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died." Here there is no such qualifying expression; the sea "became as the blood of a dead man: and every living creature died in the sea." [1]

There is no strange figure here. Not only does Our Saviour compare men's souls to fishes in His parables, and the preachers of the Gospel to "fishers of men;" but, as we have seen, Ezekiel uses the same figurative language, and Habakkuk also compares men to the fishes of the sea: "Thou . . . . makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them." [2]

Such seems to be the general meaning of this passage; and the judgment seems to point chiefly to those centuries when the world-worship of the Church was most scandalous. But when did the world-worship of the Church cease? When was that sea of the people, reduced in the Middle Ages to a state of gross immorality and spiritual death, healed again by the Living Waters of more faithful preaching? Alas! has it yet been healed? Is it not still the most appalling subject of contemplation? The great sea of "the million" lies still in worse than heathen wickedness; more loathsome in the sight of God and Angels than the blood of a dead man. Shall we do anything to heal that great sea of blood? Or must we wait until both Church and State alike are swept away by the billows of that tremendous ocean?

[1] Rev. viii. 8, 9; xvi. 2. [2] Hab. i. 14.

The judgment of the Third Vial greatly resembles that of the Second, and its imagery is evidently taken from the same Egyptian plague. But it seems to be pointed chiefly against those who were the causes of the previous judgment, the causes of the spiritual death of the people and the literal death of the saints of God. When Moses turned the rivers of Egypt into blood, "the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river;"[1] but here the modern Egyptians of Christendom are forced to drink it. "And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."[2]

Not only must we admire here this most sublime Antiphony of Angels, lauding in their song the righteous judgment of the Almighty; we must also accept with thankfulness their interpretation of the symbolic language of the vision. It embodies the Scriptural maxim of Divine Justice, that God will deal with us as we deal with others; that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again; that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; that he that killeth with the sword must be killed by the sword; that whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; that they who shed the blood of saints and prophets shall also be made to drink blood.

A similar judgment is threatened by Isaiah on all those who persecute the people of God. "I will feed

[1] Exod. vii. 21. [2] Rev. xvi. 4–7.

them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine."[1]

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: since thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee."[2]

This vision, then, shows us how the corrupters of the people and persecutors of the faithful are punished; even with the same punishment which they have caused to fall on others. They have been the causes of the spiritual death of millions and the literal death of the saints, and therefore the worst form of death is justly inflicted upon them.

Now the death of the soul is infinitely worse than that of the body. And we may therefore conclude that the death of the soul is here intended. There is probably a double meaning attached to the word "blood;" just as Our Saviour uses the word "life" in a double sense. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." That is to say, he that saves his bodily life by denying Christ shall lose his spiritual life, and he that loses the life of his body for the Gospel's sake shall find that loss to be the life of his soul. So here the word "blood" means death. But in one clause it means the death of the body, and in another the death of the soul. It is evident that blood is used in Scripture in this figurative sense for the life-blood of the soul. For St. Paul says, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."[3] And Ezekiel uses the same figurative language also when God says to him of the wicked man who does not repent because he has not been warned, "the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his

[1] Isaiah xlix. 26. [2] Ezek. xxxv. 6. [3] Acts xx. 26, 27.

blood will I require at thine hand;"[1] that is to say, not the blood of his body, but the figurative life-blood of his immortal soul.

Again, the act of drinking is used in Scripture figuratively to signify partaking of a thing. A man could literally drink blood; it is a possible act. But if blood is here used in a figurative sense for death, then the act of drinking it must also be a figurative act. And thus men are often said to drink of those things which cannot literally be drunk with the literal mouth; they are said in this prophecy, as well as in the Psalms and elsewhere, to drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and to drink of the wine of the fornication of Babylon. Now, God's anger and the punishments He inflicts on sinners are not literally wine or any other liquid which men might literally drink, neither are sins and idolatries wine; but men commit sins and suffer punishments, and when they do so they are said to drink of those sins and to drink of those punishments: that is to say, to partake of them.

There is also a Scriptural precept which tends to throw light on the symbolical act of this vision. Nothing was more strongly condemned in the Old Testament than the "eating," or, rather, as we should say, the drinking of blood. "Ye shall eat no manner of blood . . . whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people."[2] The drinking of blood, therefore, is an expression equivalent to the commission of a crime which cuts a man off from the people of God. And thus it is mentioned as the type of that class of sins which should exclude the Israelites from Divine favour and the possession of their own country. "Thus saith the Lord God: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood; and shall ye possess

[1] Ezek. iii. 18. [2] Levit. vii. 26, 27.

the land?"[1] Here we have the drinking of blood and the shedding of blood both mentioned as the crimes of the idolatrous Jews; just as, in the vision of the Third Vial, the idolatrous Christians are represented as shedding the blood of the saints, and, as a punishment, having to drink blood; to drink all the consequences of the blood they have shed, to become partakers of the blood of the saints, and responsible for it, the recipients of the just punishments which a righteous God inflicts upon the murderers of men's bodies, and, much more, of their souls. Thus St. John afterwards sees the Harlot Babylon, the Idolatrous Hierarchy of Rome, "drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus." That is to say, through her evil passions, her hatred and jealousy, she was glutted and inebriated by her infliction of death and tortures on all who reproved her by word or pure example. And, because she was thus drunken, she was afterwards made to drain to the dregs another cup which a righteous God had prepared for her: she had to "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation."

This seems to be the practical meaning of the vision.

The Living Waters of Christian teaching, which ought to have enlivened the sea and every creature in it, have often become themselves dead waters in consequence of the fearful crimes, idolatries, and murders, both literal and spiritual, committed by Christian teachers.

There is a natural fitness in the comparison here made between fountains of water and the doctrines of religious teachers. Springs and rivers are the great supporters of life. There can be no vegetable or animal life without water; and the infusion either of salt or of any poisonous ingredient into water infallibly produces the most fatal

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 25.

effects upon all who partake of it. We have had a similar figure used before in the Apocalypse. A fatal corruption of the doctrines of revealed religion was represented in the vision of the Third Trumpet by the infusion of bitterness into the springs and rivers. The same comparison is made here, although with reference probably to other polluters of the rivers of truth. The Trumpets announced the judgments of Christ upon the whole world, so far as it was brought within the sound of His Gospel, for its treatment of His Religion. The Vials are expressly said to fall on those who worship the Beast and his Image. The Trumpets announce the Judgments of Him Who rode forth on a White Horse into the whole world "conquering and to conquer." The Vials relate to special judgments inflicted on special forms of evil, developed in the Middle Ages amongst the more prominent and influential nations of the earth, and in a part of the world where Christianity was more thoroughly established than elsewhere. Of course, the further we advance in history, the closer will be the connection between the Trumpets and the Vials. Ever since the Middle Ages, when the nations of the earth were isolated one from another, when the line which separated the East from the West was clearly laid down upon the chart of the world's history, mankind, and especially the Christian portion of mankind, have become every year more and more like one great family. The more this is the case, the closer will be the connection between the judgments of the Trumpets and those of the Vials. The earlier Trumpets relate to Christendom in its widest extent, the earlier Vials to that most influential part of Christendom in which, in the Middle Ages, the Roman Hierarchy was set up. Now, the same thing happened to the Roman Hierarchy, in the ages of its persecution, which happened to Christendom in general in the ages of Mohammedan conquest.

The doctrines of revealed religion were poisoned. The poison of Mohammed was more fatal than that of Romanism. The latter, however, spread wherever the power and influence of the Pope were felt; whereas Mohammedanism, though more fatal to those who accepted it, still left a large portion even of the Eastern Church uninfected by its poison. The poison of Mohammed is compared to wormwood, causing the death of those who drink it; the poison of Romanism is compared to blood.

Because the neglected masses of the people are left in spiritual death, the sea is said to become blood; and because this state of things reacts upon the rulers of the people, the fountains and rivers are said to be changed to blood, and the authors of the general corruption are forced to drink it.

We may see how natural this comparison is, and how close an analogy exists between springs of water and religious teaching, from the following words of St. James: "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."[1] Now here the mouth of man is compared to a fountain, and his speech to the waters issuing from it. And the Apostle wishes to prove by the comparison the incongruity of good and evil speech coming from the same mouth, the impossibility of good words escaping the contamination of the evil which proceeds from the same mouth. The good things which a hypocrite says will be spoilt by the evil, for salt water and fresh cannot come from the same fountain.

Thus, in the vision of the Third Trumpet, the corrup-

[1] St. James iii. 10–12.

tion of revealed religion by the doctrines of Mohammed was represented by the embittering of the waters through an infusion into them of deadly wormwood. And, in the vision of the Third Vial, the dangerous falsehoods which Romanism has mixed with the doctrines of the Gospel are compared to blood infused into those living waters of Ezekiel's vision, which, proceeding from the House of God, ought to give life to every creature and to heal the sea of the people of all their spiritual diseases. These fountains, and the streams flowing from them, had not healed the sea; or, in plainer words, the authorised teachers of Christianity and their doctrines had not penetrated and converted the masses of the people. The sea, therefore, was turned into corruption, and became like the blood of a dead man. But not only did these authorised teachers neglect the people committed to their charge, and corrupt by falsehoods the doctrines which should have given them life; they proceeded still further, to persecute and slay the faithful Witnesses of Christ, those few Lights of Christendom who dared to shine in the midst of the universal darkness; and therefore they received the due reward of their deeds. Their very blessings were changed into curses. In the language of the Apocalypse, "the rivers and fountains of waters became blood;" and God gave "them blood to drink." In the language of the ancient prophets, because they had "eaten with the blood, and lifted up their eyes towards their idols and shed blood;"[1] therefore God "fed them with their own flesh, and made them drunken with their own blood."[2] He changed their very drink into poison. He made them drink their own blood, the blood which they had themselves shed, and the life blood of their own souls. He made them the instruments of their own ruin. He made them drink their own damnation.

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 25.

[2] Isaiah xlix. 25, 26.

Even so, in all ages, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy. . . . Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

CHAPTER XII

DESPOTISM AND REVOLUTION

"AND the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun : and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues ; and they repented not to give him glory." [1]

The sun is the source of light and heat, and it was appointed "to rule the day." It is an inestimable comfort when its warmth is moderate : and, perhaps, nothing causes more pain than exposure to the excessive heat of the sun. In this vision, the sun, which was intended to be a blessing, is made the instrument of punishment. The Fourth Angel pours the Fourth Vial of the wrath of God upon the sun, which receives in consequence an excess of strength, and gives out so much heat that men are scorched instead of warmed by its rays.

Now, of course, God might punish men literally by causing the sun to give too much heat, and by sending a drought which naturally follows. And no doubt this kind of judgment has often fallen on men. It fell on all the land of Egypt in the days of Joseph, and on Samaria during the wicked reign of Ahab. But the Apocalypse is an Allegory, not a literal prophecy ; and therefore it must, in all its parts, be interpreted on those principles by which we

[1] Rev. xvi. 8, 9.

are able to interpret other similar compositions. Prose must be understood according to the literal meaning of the words. But poems, allegories, parables, and all other works of the imagination, whether human or Divine, must be interpreted on those well-known principles on which such writings are composed.

A period of great intellectual and moral darkness, of judicial blindness in the ruling powers, and consequent ignorance of their subjects, was represented in the vision of the Fourth Trumpet by the natural imagery of a partial darkening of the sun, and moon, and stars. These natural luminaries are the sources of natural light, and when they are eclipsed a diminution of natural light must follow. Just so the Ruling Powers in Church and State are the sources of intellectual and religious light to their people; and when they neglect their duty the masses of the people are soon degraded by superstition and ignorance.

But the sun is the source of heat as well as light, and the comfort of all living things depends upon the degree of heat which it gives forth. Just so Rulers in Church and State, if their power is well regulated and wisely administered, are the great sources of comfort and well-being to all those whom God has entrusted to their charge: but the tyranny of ungodly rulers is, perhaps, the most blighting curse which can befall any nation.

This seems to be the meaning of the vision of the Fourth Vial. Under the natural image of the sun tormenting men with excessive heat, we have represented to us one of the heaviest judgments which fell on Christendom for her sins, that tyrannical despotism both in Church and State under which men groaned so long that they were goaded at last to acts of frantic violence and most blasphemous rage.

What was the chief cause of the enormities of the French

Revolution, hailed at first by wise and pious men as the regeneration of France and Europe? The frantic rage of wicked men against the excessive tyranny of their Rulers in Church and State.[1]

Let us observe how remarkably the more remote causes of that great judgment on Europe, that most sudden and unprecedented overthrow of the Pharaohs and Magicians of Modern Egypt, the Civil and Ecclesiastical Despots of Europe, are traced in this Allegory.

A man has studied history to very little purpose unless he has observed in its course how God "visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Nations are always regarded in Scripture as individuals. And in His government of this world God always makes nations reap that which they have sown. The seed-time is often quite early in their history, and the harvest comes slowly, yet surely, after many generations. The righteousness of a few individuals and their earnest exertions often seem to defer the evil, especially when they are in positions of influence and power. Yet they only defer the evil. It comes not in their days. We have many instances of this in Scripture, but none, perhaps, more striking than the case of Nineveh. Her judgment came at last, but her repentance deferred it many years.

On the other hand, when the harvest of a land is fully

[1] "Take, for example, the age of our great historians, which is also that of Montesquieu and of Voltaire. The dominant fact of that time was the abuse of ecclesiastical authority, and the yoke which, in its name, despotism had put not merely upon human action, but upon intellect itself. To fling off this yoke was the first want of the day, the aspiration of every liberal and every lettered mind. How this tinged, how it indeed inspired, the works of these authors, need not be pointed out; nor how the tone of their writings, depreciatory of all that is sacred, disfigures, in the eyes of the present generation, so much of what they wrote and thought."—*Edinburgh Review*, No. 216, p. 383.

ripe, God will thrust in the sharp sickle of judgment, and then, "though Noah, Daniel, and Job be in it . . . they deliver neither son nor daughter; they do but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."[1]

Now, Europe was in this latter position in 1789. Christendom was then ripe for judgment; and no virtue of individuals, no prayers or exertions of the true friends of moderation and liberty, could avert "the reign of terror" and the desolations of revolutionary violence.

But how are the causes of this violent convulsion of society traced out in the visions of this prophecy?

The first cause, far back in the Middle Ages, was the immorality of a world-worshipping Church and Clergy. The vices of the Christians who worshipped the powers of this world are allegorised, as we have seen, in the vision of the First Vial, by the boils which fell upon all who were marked as the slaves of the Beast and who worshipped his Image.

These caused, secondly, the general corruption and spiritual death of the neglected masses of the people; represented, in the vision of the Second Vial, under a most loathsome, but impressive figure. The whole sea was changed into the blood of a dead man.

Then, thirdly, this general corruption reacted upon the causes of it, upon the Rulers of Church and State. Those who had withheld from the people the living streams of truth which should have healed them, those who had persecuted and slain all who raised their voices against the corruption of the times, were made to eat of the fruit of their doings. The very streams of truth were poisoned with blood.

But the fourth cause, following as the natural result of

[1] Ezek. xiv. 20.

these, was the most obvious and the most immediate, namely, the Tyranny of Civil and Ecclesiastical Despots.

The magicians of Modern Egypt were, indeed, very skilful. Their work was thoroughly done, and lasted, in consequence, for a very long time. The seeds sown in the Middle Ages were a long time coming to maturity. The workers of secret signs were eminently successful during those long ages of ignorance and superstition. The chains which enslaved the liberties of mankind were made of Roman iron, and forged in the imperial workshops ; therefore it was long before they could be burst asunder. Alas that they should have been torn with such violence, and by the frantic efforts of malice, instead of the calm and well-regulated influences of light, reason, and the love of truth !

How different has been the course of things in our own highly-favoured country ! We, too, were once bound by these fetters. But a most merciful Providence released us from them slowly and gradually, in proportion as we learnt the right use of liberty. The exertions of a few faithful witnesses gradually opened the minds of men to the groundless nature of the Papal claim to universal dominion. The very vices of one of our Kings suddenly cut off our connection with Rome. A pious young prince in the hands of faithful bishops promoted the Reformation of our Church. And the burning bodies of those bishops lighted a candle in England which shines in every corner of the world, and which the black smoke of the bottomless pit of revolutionary violence shall never again wholly extinguish.

We began by obtaining religious freedom, and we gained, chiefly by its influence, a civil freedom which excites the envy and the admiration of the world.

It was very different with other nations of Christendom. The sun had power to scorch them with heat. They were

driven to madness and blasphemy by the excess of Ecclesiastical and Civil Despotism. They rose in frantic malice. They burst their bands asunder and cast their cords from them. They hurled their tyrants to the ground and trampled beneath their feet the very name of every institution both human and Divine.

It is the immediate cause of this catastrophe which now occupies us, the judgment of the Fourth Vial, which seems to mean excessive tyranny in the Ruling Powers.

We have seen that for natural causes the symbol will fairly bear this meaning. The sun is the natural ruler of our system, and so is the most obvious symbol of those powers who rule and enlighten the world. A heathen writer calls the sun "the ruler and leader of all things," "the leader, and prince, and ruler of the other luminaries." And in the Bible the very same Hebrew word which expresses the dominion of the sun expresses also the dominion of earthly princes.

The sun also was the great rival of Jehovah, the great object of the idolatrous worship of the nations which surrounded His chosen people. And the Israelites themselves were frequently tempted to join in this idolatry. And in this prophecy the Beast and his Image are the Rivals of Christ, drawing to themselves through the lying miracles of the Beast with Lamb's Horns the worship due to God only. This Beast is the symbol of the World-power, of the Rulers of the World. And therefore, for this reason also, the sun is a fitting symbol of the ruling World-power, the rival of Christ.

Again, the effect of the heat of the sun is frequently alluded to in Scripture. Because the sun cheers and enlightens the earth, it is made the emblem of the protection and blessing of God. But because the sun also causes pain and even death sometimes by its excessive heat, it is

with equal propriety made in other passages of Scripture the emblem of those things which injure men, and God is then represented as a cloud or as a great rock to shade men from the sun's rays. "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."[1] "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them."[2]

Heat also is made the emblem of those judgments which God threatens by Moses upon all those who provoke Him to jealousy by worshipping His rivals, and who forsake the Rock that protects them. "I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat."[3]

Wicked and persecuting kings are compared by Isaiah to torches or firebrands. "Fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah."[4]

Moreover, Scripture represents the tyranny of cruel rulers as one of God's methods of punishing nations for their wickedness. "I gave thee a king in mine anger."[5] "Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."[6]

And finally this peculiar mode of punishment through the cruelty of rulers is mentioned in the following passage in connection with the emblem of the Fourth Vial, a burning sun. "The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up . . .

[1] Psalm cxxi. 5, 6.
[2] Isaiah xlix. 10; comp. Jer. xvii. 8.
[3] Deut. xxxii. 23, 24.
[4] Isaiah vii. 4.
[5] Hosea xiii. 11.
[6] 1 Sam. viii. 18.

the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by the brooks shall wither." [1]

Such then is, as seems probable, the meaning of this vision. The world-worship of Christians provoked the Lord to jealousy, and as a punishment He subjected the greater part of Christendom to the most withering despotism in Church and State. That sun which should have given men warmth was made to scorch them with burning heat. Those rulers which should have been its blessing were in judgment made the curse of Christendom.

There is the closest connection between the visions of the Fourth Trumpet and the Fourth Vial. The former perhaps a little precedes the latter. Despotism grew up during the darkness of the Middle Ages, but its tormenting heat was scarcely felt until the minds of men became a little more enlightened. Then it was they felt the keenness of their punishment, and blasphemed God for inflicting it upon them.

The people walked in darkness because the lights of Christendom, the Rulers in Church and State, had little light in them. But, as their light began to return, intense heat returned with it. The Civil and Ecclesiastical Despotism, which was nourished by ignorance and superstition, became the torment of the ages of light and scepticism.

Thus, although both these visions embrace generally the same period of history, from the dark ages to the French Revolution, the vision of the Fourth Trumpet alludes principally to the first and darkest portion of that period, and the vision of the Fourth Vial to the latter portion, when men felt so intensely the oppression of Civil and Ecclesiastical Tyranny.

The one points out the ignorance and superstition

[1] Isaiah xix. 4–7.

caused by the neglect of Christian rulers; the other, the despotism of those rulers, and the consequent hatred of dominion and blasphemous infidelity of their subjects. Christendom is punished for its treatment of Christianity, in the one instance, by the ignorance and judicial blindness of its Rulers; and in the other, by their tyranny. The former of these punishments is symbolised by the darkening of the heavenly luminary; the latter, by the intensity of its heat. This figurative language is singularly natural, the analogies it suggests are obvious, and the interpretation here given seems consistent with the rest of Scripture and the general history of mediæval and modern Christendom.

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."[1]

This judgment falls upon the seat or throne of the Beast, upon the Throne of the World-power. The Throne of the World-power is said in the Apocalypse to belong to Satan, for we read in the 13th chapter that "the serpent gave the beast his power, and his throne, and great authority." Neither does this statement contradict the rest of Scripture.

Although in one passage of Scripture it is said that the powers of this world are ordained of God, it is asserted in another that they are in the hands of Satan. There is, in truth, a sense in which the throne is an ordinance of God; "for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."[2]

But, again, there is a sense in which the Seat of Supreme

[1] Rev. xvi. 10, 11. [2] Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

Power in this world is said to belong to Satan, and Scripture represents him as having power to give to his instruments dominion over the world. For the trial of mankind God allows him to have this power. God allows him to influence the hearts of rulers, and through them to promote his evil designs in the world. "The Devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."[1] Now, it is not true that Satan can give supreme power in the world to whomsoever he will. But he tempts many to seek it. And when they succeed in those attempts which Satan suggests to their ambition, and in which he aids them by his wicked instruments, then the possession of power may be said in a certain sense to be Satan's gift, then the Devil may be said to have raised them to the throne.

Again, as there is a sense in which resistance to Cæsar is resistance to God, since God allowed Cæsar to gain supreme power, which supreme power is for wise purposes an ordinance of God, and as such must always exist in the world in some form or other; so there is a sense in which obedience to Cæsar is resistance to God and obedience to God's enemy, there is a kind of resistance to Cæsar which is lawful and religious, for we must not only "render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," but also "unto God the things that be God's."

Daniel obeyed his master in all things belonging to the kingdom, his bitterest enemies could not find a flaw in his obedience: but he would not worship the king, or neglect the worship of God. And a greater than Daniel could say,

[1] St. Luke iv. 5–7.

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And not all the malice of His adversaries could substantiate a single charge against Him of the violation of the human laws under which He passed His blameless life. "For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together." [1]

In a sense, therefore, which in no way contradicts the Supremacy of God, or detracts from the authority of the existing rulers of the world in all worldly things, the throne of the despot is the gift of Satan. But wicked men will not always bear in mind this distinction, so plainly marked in Scripture, between lawful and unlawful resistance to the existing rulers of the world.

As righteous government is one of the greatest of blessings, so the tyranny of despots is one of the most withering of curses, one of the most fearful judgments with which God punishes the wicked.

This kind of withering tyranny was inflicted upon Christendom as a punishment for its treatment of Christianity. But instead of leading men to repent, it urged them to blaspheme God, who had allowed such a judgment to fall upon them. This was allegorised in the Fourth Vial. "Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God."

Instead of repenting of their wickedness in so corrupting and neglecting the doctrines of the Gospel; instead of endeavouring to lessen gradually the evils of Civil and Ecclesiastical Despotism by the softening and enlightening influences of the religion of Jesus; the inhabitants of the most powerful nation in Christendom rose in fierce rage against their rulers, and astonished the sleeping world with a most unprecedented overthrow of every form of government, whether human or Divine. This was the result of tyranny in the rulers, and blasphemous irreligion in those

[1] St. Mark xiv. 56.

ruled. The laws of God and the rights of man were forgotten both by rulers and people; and the result was the catastrophe of 1789.

Now the judgment of the Fourth Vial was poured upon the sun; and its power was so augmented that men were scorched with burning heat. That is to say, Despotism in Church and State was allowed to grow to such a height that men were tormented by it, and inflamed with blasphemous rage against that government which, however it may be abused, is nevertheless an ordinance of God.

Another phase of judgment follows. The Vial of the Fifth Angel envelops in darkness that sun whose heat was just now so terrible. He poured his Vial upon the Seat of the Beast, upon the THRONE of the World-power, upon those Rulers who had been so tyrannical; and their kingdom was involved in darkness. This was a righteous judgment upon those who had ruled with so much tyranny, who had so long in religion and politics deprived mankind of lawful and reasonable liberty. But there were faults on both sides. Rebellion is often the punishment of tyranny; but it is not a lawful mode of obtaining relief from its oppression. Those, therefore, who succeeded for a short time in trampling underfoot the Throne of the Ruling Power, and filling his kingdom with darkness, brought upon themselves the most terrific judgment, so that, in the figurative language of the vision, "they gnawed their tongues for their labour, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their labours and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

The judgment we are considering is, then, a judgment which fell upon the Throne; upon that Royal Power which is an ordinance of God for the well-being of society; but which, through the ignorance and superstition of men, and the intrigues of the Pope, had bound men's minds and

bodies with the chains of a most galling slavery. Never was there a judgment which fell so remarkably upon the Throne of the World-power; never was there a judgment brought about by a more blasphemously irreligious set of men; never was there a blow which so recoiled upon the heads of those who gave it; never was there a judgment which found men so hardened and impenitent, and which so left them hardened afterwards, as the Judgment of the Revolution of 1789.

The language in which this judgment is described is taken from the description of the plague of darkness, the ninth judgment which fell upon the king and kingdom of Egypt. The darkness of Egypt was a judgment inflicted upon that sun, which was one of the chief objects of Egyptian worship. And the darkness of the Fifth Vial is a judgment upon the Throne of the Beast, who has drawn to himself the worship of the Egyptians of Christendom. We find, moreover, that the Egyptian boils are not yet healed. They still blaspheme God in this vision on account of their sores; those boils which fell on the worshippers of the Beast from the Vial of the First Angel. The Allegory and history are consistent in this point also. For we have too good reason to know that the general corruption of morals was not amended by the violence and lawlessness of the revolutionary times.

As we could before compare the Fourth Trumpet and the Fourth Vial, so here we may find the fullest allegorical description of the Revolutionary Era in the connected visions of the Fifth Vial and the Fifth Trumpet.[1]

Taking the two visions together, we observe first that

[1] "Quod ergo in Tubis minus dixit, hic in Phialis est. Non aspiciendus est ordo dictorum, quoniam sæpe Spiritus Sanctus, ubi ad novissimum temporis finem percurrerit, rursus ad eadem tempora redit, et supplet ea quæ minus dixit."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

their imagery is borrowed from two consecutive Egyptian judgments : the eighth plague of the locusts and the ninth plague of darkness. These were the two plagues which immediately preceded that midnight slaughter of the Egyptians which led to the expulsion of the people of God from Egypt and the overthrow of their enemies in the Red Sea ; and the visions of the Fifth Trumpet and Fifth Vial immediately precede that last great slaughter of Armageddon, the Mountain of Megiddo, which issues in the deliverance of God's people and the final judgment of their enemies.

But we are not to suppose that, because these visions manifestly relate to the French Revolution of 1789, they therefore received in that event their complete fulfilment. It is far more probable that they symbolise a period or cycle of revolutions, which will issue in that general Apostasy, and the Revelation of the Man of Sin, of whom St. Paul so emphatically speaks as the immediate forerunner of the Second Advent.

Doubtless Satan has been long preparing the way for that Wicked One. Even from the beginning that mysterious wickedness has been working to produce the last and most formidable ruler of the powers of this world, who shall slay the Witnesses of Jesus, and be himself destroyed "by the spirit of his mouth" and "the brightness of his coming."[1] But we cannot yet see more than the tokens of his approach in the sins and false doctrines of Christendom. There are fearful signs indeed of the coming Apostasy, but humanly speaking the consummation seems still far distant.

We may conclude, therefore, that these two visions relate to the fifth phase of Judgment, that judicial period which affects chiefly the royal power, the Throne of the Beast. The agents of it are the infidels and the anarchists of the age ; those who, from having been tyrannised over

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 8.

before, have become the fierce enemies of all government both in Church and State.

Now let us observe how the several steps of this judicial period are marked in the two visions, and how they throw light one upon another.

Under the symbolic act of the opening of the Abyss, the withdrawal of those Providential restraints which prevent revolution and rebellion is figuratively pointed out. The result of this withdrawal of restraint is a general overthrow of all government and a state of anarchy and confusion, and this is described under the figure of the darkening of the sun by the smoke which issues from the open Abyss. We have the same things allegorised in the Fifth Vial. The Throne of the ruling powers is judged; the sun of their kingdom is darkened; that sun which had so scorched men that they blasphemed God is involved in well deserved darkness.

But all those men who in the trumpet vision are without the seal of God are described in the vision of the vials as having the Mark of the Beast: that is to say, as being the Slaves and Worshippers of that World-power which is the Rival of Christ. These men are tormented, but not brought to repentance, by the Locusts which issue from the smoke of the Abyss, those numerous and destructive scourges of Christendom who derived their power to injure from the events of 1789.

But these Locusts at last have a king over them, who is emphatically called the Destroyer. And so it was in the course of the French Revolution. The countless and most destructive armies of the Revolution soon found themselves under the iron sway of a Destroyer. And so it ever will be when revolutions take place again. The rebels run their mad and short career and then fall beneath the sword and sceptre of a despot. The locusts of his numerous armies

become the supporters of his power, and the devourers of the material resources as well as the religious and civil liberties of his kingdom.

It is the most fearful sign of the times in which we live that the Judicial Revolutions of Christendom have not awakened its inhabitants to repentance. In the powerful language of the Allegory, "they gnaw their tongues for their toil, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their toils and their sores;" but, alas! "they repent not of their deeds." We wonder at the continued hardness of Pharaoh's heart, after the finger of God had been recognised even by his own magicians in the judgments which fell upon his kingdom. But the impenitence of modern Egypt is not less wonderful. The most fearful judgments have fallen upon her. But her inhabitants only blaspheme God the more and repent not of their deeds.

The same marvellous imposture still exists at Rome and spreads its baneful influence over many parts of the Christian Church. The worship of the Virgin and saints and images is still supported by kings and people; and the World is still worshipped by the majority of Christians. The same infidel and revolutionary principles are allowed to embitter the minds of men with discontent, and to cause the foundations of every throne in Christendom to tremble. The "sores" of many vices still deform those who ought to be the teachers of others, and the masses of the people are still left in ignorance of the Religion of Jesus.

There is only one thing which can heal every political grievance and rectify every erroneous doctrine: the preaching and practice of the Word of God. There is only one thing which can give us that degree of political and religious freedom which alone is possible in this world; and that is, the zealous practice by both rulers and people of the

precepts of the Gospel, and the earnest endeavour of high and low, rich and poor, to do their duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place them. This, and this only, will enable them to be "free without using their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

But, alas! Pharaoh will never repent, and the heart of the Egyptians is hard as stone. "They blaspheme the God of heaven because of their toils and sores, but they repent not of their deeds." And therefore tyranny and rebellion, rebellion and tyranny, will probably alternate until they issue in the great Apostasy and the revelation of that MAN OF SIN, whom the Lord alone shall destroy by the Spirit of his Mouth and by the brightness of His Coming.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT IS BABYLON?

THE visions of the Sixth and Seventh Vials, relating as they do to the destruction of the Great Babylon, cannot be interpreted until we have ascertained from the 17th chapter what the Babylon of the Apocalypse represents.

Almost every writer on the subject is of opinion that Babylon does not mean the ancient Chaldæan City so called, but stands in this Allegory for the City of Rome. Their reasons for this opinion are conclusive.

The City appears in the Allegory under the significant emblem of a Woman. "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast . . . . and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT."[1]

Two marks are given by which we may recognise Rome in this symbol, and not imagine the prophecy to point to ancient Chaldæan Babylon.

1. The City is built, not upon a plain, but upon Seven Hills. "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."[2]

2. The Woman whom St. John saw was described to him in the vision as the City which held the supreme power in his own age. "The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."[3]

No other city except Rome answers this description.

[1] Rev. xvii. 3, 5. [2] Rev. xvii. 9. [3] Rev. xvii. 18.

Rome alone was the Mistress of the world in those days; Rome alone was notorious as being a City built upon Seven Hills.

These and other reasons have led both Roman Catholic and Protestant writers to the same conclusion, that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is the City of Rome.

But Rome was for about three hundred years after the date of this prophecy a Pagan City, whose inhabitants worshipped Mars and Jupiter, and all the gods of classic story. For nearly four times three hundred years she has been the Papal City; the City of a Man who is both a Temporal Prince and a Christian Bishop; the City of a Bishopric which has played the most prominent and important part of any power in Mediæval and Modern Christendom; the City in which, as we justly think, the most groundless and even blasphemous claim to universal dominion in things Civil and Ecclesiastical has been set up, partly by the aid of Christian Princes, partly against their wishes by means of the ignorance and superstition of their subjects. For more than a thousand years Rome has been a Papal City.

This, then, is a most important question to determine. Does the prophecy relate to Pagan or Papal Rome? The Apocalypse describes this City as being for a long time supported by the Ruling Powers of the World, and then destroyed by them. Does this mean that the ruling powers of the world for a long time support Pagan Rome and afterwards destroy it? or that they act thus towards the Papal City? Let us examine the prophecy of the 17th chapter in connection with the Sixth Trumpet and Sixth Vial. It is a vision of judgment, a vision intended to foreshow the punishment of this Great City. It is said to the Apostle, "Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."

Then the prophet is taken into a wilderness, where he sees "a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns . . . . and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT."[1]

Now, here we have the City of Rome represented by the natural emblem of a Woman, sitting upon a Beast, upon the banks of a mighty river. The Beast, like one of those monstrous productions of the oriental imagination, is symbolical of an historical fact as well as the Woman. The Woman is the emblem of the Roman City, and the Beast, as we have already seen, has been explained by Daniel to be the Symbol of the World-power. What are those many waters upon whose banks the woman sits? The prophecy informs us. "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

These waters have been alluded to before more than once. In the 9th chapter, Four Angels of destruction, who had been bound upon the banks of the great river Euphrates,[2] were represented as loosed when the Sixth Angel sounded his Trumpet. And in the 16th chapter, "the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared."[3]

Ancient Babylon was built upon the great river Euphrates. And so the Allegorical Babylon is built upon an Allegorical Euphrates. The Woman who is the emblem of the Roman City sits upon the banks of many waters. But these are not the waters of a literal river, as we might have supposed, but are explained by the prophecy itself to symbolise "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

[1] Rev. xvii. 1–15.
[2] Rev. ix. 14.
[3] Rev. xvi. 12.

Here, then, we have a manifest connection between the visions of the Sixth Trumpet, the Sixth Vial, and that of the Judgment of Babylon.

In the first of these visions four instruments of destruction are set free after having been for some time restrained upon the banks of the Euphrates, and the vision terminates in the destruction of the Great City. In the second this same Euphrates is dried up in order that the way of Babylon's destroyers may be prepared. And in the third vision, the one we are examining, the Woman who had been sitting upon a Beast by the side of many waters is made desolate and naked, is devoured and burnt by the Ten Horns of the Beast on which she had before been supported.

It seems, then, that the vision of the Sixth Trumpet allegorises the preparation for the destruction of Rome; represents the loosing of the instruments prepared of old for her destruction; and, by the aid of the temple vision closely connected with it, extends its symbolism so as to include that event.

It seems also that the vision of the Sixth Vial relates to the same preparation for the destruction of Rome, but does not, perhaps, extend beyond the preparation, the Seventh Vial containing the destruction of the City itself.

It seems also that the vision of the 17th chapter is intended to fill up and explain the otherwise hopelessly unintelligible imagery of the Sixth Trumpet, and Sixth and Seventh Vials.

This latter vision explains the meaning of the Great City, and of the Great River; and also points out who those Kings of the East are, who, when the Great River has been dried up, are no longer prevented from marching into and destroying the city.

The Sixth Trumpet announces the removal of that

impediment which had hitherto kept back the destroyers of Babylon. These destroyers had been bound upon the banks of the Euphrates; that is to say, the Euphrates was an obstacle which prevented them from destroying the city. But when the Sixth Trumpet sounded they were loosed; that is to say, this obstacle was taken out of their way.

The Sixth Vial tells us how this obstacle was removed. The River was dried up in order that the way of the Kings of the East, that is to say, the destroyers of Babylon, might be prepared.

Then the vision of the 17th chapter comes in to answer the natural question, Who are these Kings of the East? For it tells us who the destroyers of Babylon are. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."[1]

We observe here a clear distinction made between the three following symbols: the Beast, the Ten Horns upon the Beast, and the Woman called Babylon. There is a similar distinction made between three symbols in the 13th chapter. There we have a Ten-horned Beast, explained to personify the World-power in the hands of a Tenfold cluster or family of Kings; a Two-horned Beast, the symbol of the Pope; and an Image of the Beast, allegorising the Roman Cæsars from Charlemagne downwards, as well as every prince in Christendom who, by claiming universal empire or by assuming the title of Cæsar Imperator, shall make himself the Image of ancient Rome.

In this vision of Babylon there is, for important reasons, no mention of the Image of Rome which the Pope set up

[1] Rev. xvii. 16, 17.

in the dark ages. This vision relates to the destruction of Rome, and only incidentally to the commencement of its power in Europe. The vision of the 13th chapter relates chiefly to the establishment of the mediæval system of despotism which the Pope brought about, and only incidentally to the coming judgment. The 13th chapter symbolises the beginning of Satan's warfare as a concealed enemy, the building up of the Papal and Imperial system. The vision of the 17th chapter is expressly and principally a Vision of Judgment, to reveal the destruction of the Papacy.

Now, the most prominent point in the history of the World-power, at that time when the great Civil and Ecclesiastical Despotism of Europe commenced, was the revival of the Image of the Roman Empire in the person of Charlemagne. But this Empire was annihilated by Napoleon, and then re-established by him in his own person. That Image to which the Pope gave life came to an end after having lasted a thousand years. But the same claim to universal dominion was set up by Napoleon. And it is in this claim to universal dominion, rather than in any form of Papal coronation, that the likeness to ancient Rome consists. Any prince in Christendom who strives to gain universal dominion, or assumes that superiority over other princes which the Imperial title implies, identifies himself thereby with the Little Horn of Daniel, the Image of the Beast of the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse, and THE BEAST, as distinguished from his Ten Horns, in the 17th chapter.

The 13th chapter, relating to the beginning of the European system, mentions that Image of the Beast which the Pope set up. But the 17th chapter, relating to the judgment about to fall upon the Pope's City, calls the One Supreme Ruler, with whom the princes of Christendom combine for the execution of that judgment, pre-eminently The Beast, or final Antichrist.

A comparison, then, of all these visions, distinct in their imagery but evidently connected one with another by many marks of similarity, seems to establish the following points :—

1. The Roman City is represented as destroyed by those Kings of the earth by whom it had been supported. For the Apostle sees the Emblematic Woman sitting upon a Ten-horned Beast at first, and then afterwards destroyed by it.

2. These Kings are represented as in the end combining with some One King more powerful than the rest for the double purpose of fighting against Christ and destroying the Roman City.[1] For the Apostle is told that "they have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast," and "shall make war with the Lamb."[2] And he is also told that the Ten Horns shall destroy the Harlot, because "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."[3]

3. These Kings of the earth are represented as being for a long time prevented from destroying Rome by those masses of the people in every nation who support her ; and afterwards as being able to destroy her because this popular support has been withdrawn from her.

Her enemies were for a long time unable to take ancient Babylon. But at last they dried up the river Euphrates by suddenly turning its waters into another channel, and then they marched into the city by the dry bed of the river.

[1] "Vastabunt Babylonem et comburent eam igni, et dabunt regnum suum Bestiæ, et effugabunt Ecclesiam ; post deinde ab adventu Domini nostri destruentur."—Irenæus, lib. v. c. 26.

"Decem reges . . . potestatem suam Bestiæ suppeditabunt, qui unam cum Bestiâ voluntatem habebunt, extinguendi nimirum nominis Christi."—Bullinger, *Conc.* p. 51.

[2] Rev. xvii. 13, 14.

[3] Rev. xvii. 17.

Just so, in the vision of the Sixth Trumpet, the armies long held in check upon the banks of the Euphrates are suddenly let loose. For in the vision of the Sixth Vial that Great River is dried up that a way may be prepared for them. The mode by which the river is dried up, that is to say, the causes which lead to the withdrawal of popular support from Rome, are further allegorised in the vision of the Sixth Vial. The people are made infidels, together with their kings, by the propagation of the doctrines of Satan, the evil maxims of worldly policy, and the lying miracles of Rome herself. The prophet sees Three Unclean Spirits coming out of the mouth of the Serpent, the Beast, and the False Prophet. These are further described as working lying miracles for the purpose of gathering together the kings of the earth and their people against the cause of Christ, to fight out the Last Great Battle against the Religion of Jesus. And this is consistent with the vision of the 17th chapter, which represents the Destroyers of Rome as hostile also to the Lamb. The infidelity of their people enables the Kings of the earth to punish Rome for her usurpations ; that infidelity is brought about partly by the false teaching and lying miracles of Rome herself, and partly by the doctrines of Satan and the ungodly maxims of worldly policy. But, of course, the same popular infidelity which renders possible the destruction of Rome also tends to array the powers of the world against Christ and His faithful servants. Their old persecutor is destroyed, but the last great persecutor, THE MAN OF SIN, is revealed, who is then represented in these visions as being destroyed by the Coming of Christ Himself, according to the prophecy of St. Paul—"Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." [1]

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 8.

4. The fourth point, therefore, which a comparison of these visions establishes, is this: That the destruction of this Apocalyptic Babylon is one of the last events in the history of this dispensation; and, therefore, that it cannot possibly relate to old Pagan Rome, but must refer to the Papal City.

We shall be able to ascertain the period of history to which this vision of the 17th chapter refers from another point in the imagery, which will show us that Babylon must mean Papal Rome.

The World-power which supports her is personified by a Ten-horned Beast with Seven Heads. The angel who shows St. John the vision proceeds to explain to him the meaning of this Beast, and of his Heads and Horns. "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition."[1]

From its use in the 13th chapter, there can be no question that this Symbol of a Beast is the Emblem of the World-power in all ages, from Daniel's time to the End. But what particular age of the World-power does it here symbolise? The prophecy tells us that it refers to the Eighth phase of it. "There are seven kings" (or phases of the World-power): "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of" (after or out of) "the seven."[2]

Truly, then, this Beast "was," for the World-power had existed always. But in St. John's age he did not exist in that Eighth form contemplated in this vision of Babylon. Five phases of the World-power had fallen in St. John's age, and one was in existence. But that one existing then was

[1] Rev. xvii. 7, 8. [2] Rev. xvii. 10, 11.

not the form to which the vision of Babylon related. Therefore, of the Beast which he saw in this vision it is said "he is not." A time was coming, however, when he would exist. This time is pointed out in this vision and that of the 13th chapter: the time when the Sixth Head of the World-power, or the old Roman Empire, having been destroyed, and a short-lived dominion having been held by the barbarians, an Eighth phase of Empire came into existence in the person of Charlemagne and his successors, regarded as the Head of the family of European Princes. This Beast is described in the 13th chapter as coming up out of the sea, and in the 17th chapter as ascending out of the abyss.

We may conclude, then, that since the Beast which St. John saw in the vision, first supporting and then afterwards destroying Babylon, is called the Eighth form of the World-power, and is expressly distinguished from that Sixth Form which existed in the Apostolic age and for several ages afterwards, the vision cannot relate to Pagan Rome, and, consequently, must relate to that form of World-power which rose up in Christendom after its fall.

If, then, the question be asked, why may not the Babylon of St. John relate to Pagan Rome? We answer, first, because the prophecy represents it as a City supported by a phase of World-power which had no existence until some time after the Fall of Pagan Rome. And, secondly, because the prophecy also represents its destruction as manifestly one of the last events of this dispensation, soon followed by the death of the Witnesses, the general Resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

Moreover, the description of this city applies with more truth to the Papal than to the Pagan Capital.

She is represented as a Harlot committing fornication with the Kings of the earth and supported by their people.

"I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."[1] Now, in order to shift this prophecy from the Papal city, Bossuet asserts that if an idolatrous Christian city had been here intended she would have been called an Adulteress and not a Harlot. A church is the married spouse of Christ, and therefore the worship of the powers of the world or of other idols would be called adultery in her and not whoredom; as Jeremiah says of Israel that they committed adultery in worshipping stocks and stones.[2] Anyone, however, who will read the ancient prophets in the Septuagint will see that there is no force at all in this argument. "If a man," writes Jeremiah concerning Judah, "put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers (ἐξεπόρνευσας) . . . thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms (πορνείαις) and with thy wickedness . . . thou hadst a whore's forehead (ὄψις πόρνης)."[3]

Surely it is a bad cause which requires the support of such an argument. Yet it is the chief argument of one of the best Roman Catholic writers. "How is the faithful city become an harlot (πόρνη)!"[4]

The faithful Church is represented in this prophecy under the emblem of a Pure Woman, the Bride of Christ. The symbol of an impure woman guilty of fornication with the powers of this world, the rivals of Christ, is more applicable to a worldly Christian city than to Pagan Rome.

[1] Rev. xvii. 1, 2.
[2] Jer. iii. 8, 9.
[3] Jer. iii. 1, 2, 3.
[4] Isaiah i. 21.

In this prophecy Christ is the Lamb, the World-power is the Beast. The pure Church is the Bride of the Lamb, the corrupt Church commits fornication with the Beast. To show the application of this symbol to Papal Rome it is not necessary to prove that she encourages the worship of the Virgin and Saints, and Images of wood and stone. This would make the picture more exact. But the notorious fact that Rome has been the chief cause of the World-worship of the Church is quite enough to identify her with the Babylon of this prophecy.

The ancient prophets accuse the Israelites of whoredom, not only because they worship stocks and stones, but also because they seek strength by alliance with Egypt, instead of putting their trust in God. "Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours."[1]

The 16th chapter of Ezekiel is perhaps the best commentary on the 17th chapter of the Apocalypse. The very same images are used. The very same contrast is drawn between the pure and the corrupt Church. And, moreover, the very same judgment is threatened, and the very same instruments of judgment pointed out. The Ancient Church in her purity is compared to a Pure Wife arrayed in bridal ornaments. "I sware unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water . . . I girded thee about with fine linen . . . I put a jewel on thy forehead . . . and a beautiful crown upon thine head . . . and thy raiment was of fine linen."

Such is Ezekiel's description of the pure Jewish Church. It corresponds with the imagery by which the pure Christian Church is represented in the Apocalypse. "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And

[1] Ezek. xvi. 26.

he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious." [1] "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." [2] In the earlier visions of the Apocalypse also we have seen the Pure Church, who, together with her seed, is the object of Satan's wrath and continued persecution, represented as a Pure Woman.

The correspondence between the Hebrew and the Christian prophets is not less striking when they come to describe the fallen and polluted Church. Ezekiel calls her an "imperious whorish woman." "Thou didst trust," he says, "in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by ; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon . . . in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth. . . . Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians . . . thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians . . . thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldæa . . . and hast not been as a harlot in that thou scornest hire . . . they give gifts to all whores : but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them." [3] These are the words of Ezekiel concerning the Jewish Church. The following are the words of St. John concerning the Babylonish Christian Church. He calls her "the great whore . . . with whom

[1] Rev. xxi. 9–11. [2] Rev. xix. 7, 8. [3] Ezek. xvi. 15–34.

the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." [1]

Now we know that Israel was punished by those very nations whose idolatrous rites she had adopted and whose aid she had sometimes sought contrary to the will of God. Ezekiel therefore represents the whorish Jewish Church as punished by her lovers. And so St. John declares that the Kings who have supported the harlot and partaken of her fornications shall be the judicial instruments of her destruction.

Ezekiel writes thus: "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord. Behold . . . I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee . . . and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare . . . and they shall burn thine houses with fire." [2] How like the words of St. John! "The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." [3]

There is also another striking resemblance between this chapter of Ezekiel and the Apocalypse. The faithful Israelites are not involved in this condemnation. The impure woman is pardoned when judgments have called her to repentance. The whole visible Church contains the

[1] Rev. xvii. 4, 5. [2] Ezek. xvi. 37–43. [3] Rev. xvii. 16.

good as well as the bad, and the effect of the judgment is that the bad are either destroyed or led to repentance, and the good are delivered from surrounding evil. The Pure Woman and the Harlot are in one sense the same and in another sense widely different. Israel sometimes means all Israel and sometimes only faithful Israel. The Church sometimes means the whole Church, containing good and bad, and sometimes only the pure and living part of the Church; that part which will be the Church after the judgment. An apparent confusion necessarily results from the use of symbolical language in which One Emblem stands for a Corporate Body consisting of numberless individuals differing to any extent in character and condition.

Thus Ezekiel represents the whole visible Jewish Church under the one emblem of a woman married to the Lord. When a large majority of Jews fall into idolatry, the woman is said to play the harlot, although there are still in the Church the prophets of the Lord and the seven thousand who have not worshipped Baal.

So when the larger and more prominent portion of the Christian Church has become idolatrous and polluted by worshipping the World-power, St. John sees that Church represented as a Harlot forsaking her Husband and committing fornication with the Kings of the earth and making all people the sharers of her fornication. Yet all this time she has within her communion many who bear witness against her errors; and many, whom she has driven out of her communion, are still members of the One Catholic Church, yea, and more living members than those who are on her side.

This, then, is only an apparent confusion, the necessary consequence of the use of symbolical language. There is Only One Church, let men divide it how they will. And therefore when that One Church, taken as a whole, is

in a pure state, it is symbolically called the Holy City, and the Bride of the Lamb; but when, taken as a whole, it has fallen into idolatrous practices and world-worship, it is allegorically represented as a Great Wicked City and as a Harlot worshipping the Beast instead of the Lamb.

Continuing the Allegory of Ezekiel, we observe that after the Harlot has been punished for her whoredoms, she is pardoned on repentance and received again as the Pure Wife by virtue of the original marriage covenant. "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth . . . and thou shalt know that I am the Lord . . . when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."[1] Indeed the Lord uses the same powerful figure to magnify His love above every human affection, and to show how impossible it is for the Church to sin beyond the reach of God's forgiveness, if only she will repent when He judges her for her sins. "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."[2]

Now of course this means what St. Paul expresses in plainer words. "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"[3] God has established Christianity and appointed a Church for the salvation of all faithful and penitent sinners. The position, therefore, of the Christian Church is much the same as that of the Jewish Church when St. Paul wrote. She is the bearer of a promise of eternal salvation to all who repent and believe. Although, therefore, she may greatly sin herself, the promises of God will take effect wherever they meet

[1] Ezek. xvi. 60–63. [2] Jer. iii. 1. [3] Rom. iii. 3.

with faith and repentance. The sins of the Church cannot separate her faithful members from the love of God.

There is in reality an immeasurable difference between the faithful and the unfaithful members of the Christian Church. God judges the Church in order to cleanse it from its unfaithful members, and then it becomes again "the bride of the Lamb;" "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . but holy and without blemish."[1]

Thus in the Apocalypse even Babylon is represented as having in her many saints, and they are warned to come out of her before she is judged. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."[2] These people obey God's calling and are saved, and then while her smoke is rising up for ever, that is to say, when her impenitent members have been consigned to their punishment, the heavenly voices proclaim, "Let us be glad and rejoice . . . for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."[3]

It is to be observed that throughout this part of the Apocalypse there is a continual contrast between the Lamb and the Beast; that is to say, between Christ and the World-power; also between the Pure Woman, the Bride of the Lamb, and the Harlot who commits fornication with the Beast; that is to say, between the pure Church which worships Christ and the corrupt Church which worships the world; and also between the Great City, the Holy Jerusalem, and another great city, called in one vision Babylon, and in

[1] Ephes. v. 27. [2] Rev. xviii. 4. [3] Rev. xix. 7–9.

another very distinct and parenthetical vision, "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." But the Pure Woman and the Harlot, the emblems of the Holy City and the Wicked City, never appear together in the same scene.

In the Allegory we lose sight of the Pure Woman when she has reached her appointed place in the wilderness; that is to say, when the establishment of the Christian Church by the powers of the world has taken place.

We see the Pure Woman for the last time supported on the Two Wings of the Great Eagle, and in the act of fleeing into her appointed place in the wilderness. We lose sight of her from this time until she appears again after the Harlot has been punished and God's people have been called out of her. But during all the time that the Harlot is in her glory and is supported by kings and people, the faithful members of a corrupt Church are represented by other symbols. They are called "the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." [1] They are symbolised by the ancient prophets Moses and Elijah, and are called God's "two witnesses" who bear their testimony in sorrow, like the ancient prophets in the days of Israel's whoredoms; they "prophesy . . . clothed in sackcloth;" [2] arrayed in the black dress of mourning. They are taken into a state of rest upon their death to await the last great persecution and the final deliverance of the faithful. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held . . . and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." [3]

[1] Rev. xii. 17. [2] Rev. xi. 3. [3] Rev. vi. 10, 11.

The Church indeed was instituted to be the messenger of the Gospel to the whole world, and the instrument of salvation to individuals. For this purpose the Providence of God established her amongst the most powerful and influential nations. And this act of Providence is represented in the Allegory by the figurative act of the Woman's establishment in an appointed place in the wilderness where she is nourished for a certain period. It was upon the Two Wings of the Great Eagle of old Rome that she was providentially carried to this position of power. It was not the wish of Satan that Christianity should be thus established. He therefore endeavoured to sweep away Christianity together with the Roman Empire by those symbolical waters which mean multitudes of people. But, not succeeding in this attempt, Satan becomes no longer an open opponent of Christianity, but a corrupter through the Roman City and Bishop of the largest portion of the Christian Church. He draws away the woman's heart from Christ to the worship of the powers of this world. Then St. John is taken into a wilderness, such as that into which he last saw the Pure Woman fleeing. There he beholds not a Pure Woman but a Harlot, worshipping the World-power and persecuting the saints of God. He sees this Woman "drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the Witnesses of Jesus," and well may he "wonder with great admiration." He would not wonder so much if he saw the Beast, the symbol of the World-power, doing this; but he does indeed wonder to see a Woman doing this, a Woman, the well-known symbol in ancient prophecy of the Church and People of God. Doubtless he was reminded of his great Master's lamentation: "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee!"[1]

[1] St. Luke xiii. 33, 34.

"Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel."[1]

Moreover, St. John sees this Harlot supported by the Emblem of the World-power, and also by Many Waters. Here is another contrast, intimating another change in the mode of Satan's warfare. He is in all things now the false friend of the Church, being prevented by Providence from success as an open enemy. He tried to sweep away the Church, when it was supported by the old Roman Empire, by the Waters of the People. Now, on the other hand, he corrupts it by Popular Support. The Woman sits upon the Beast and upon Many Waters.

The saints are further described, during this period of the Harlot's glory, as those who have not polluted themselves by the spiritual fornication of the Woman. "These are they which were not defiled with women."[2] They are those who have "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." That is to say, although they have in one sense belonged to him, and been marked and numbered as his slaves, they have resisted his worship, and continued faithful in their service to God.

They are also described as sealed on their foreheads with "the seal of the living God."

Thus, during that period of history when the Church, regarded as a whole, has been notoriously idolatrous and worldly-minded, the work of individual salvation, that great work for which the Church was instituted, has been going on most prosperously, and numbers have been added to

[1] St. Matt. xxiii. 35. [2] Rev. xiv. 4.

that blessed company which shall hereafter be manifested as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the Faithful Bride of the Lamb.

But because the One Church of Christ, regarded as a whole, has been idolatrous, she is represented during all this period as the Wicked City which crucified our Lord, called Sodom for her immorality, and Egypt and Babylon for her idolatry and persecution of the faithful Witnesses of Jesus ; as a Harlot committing fornication with the Kings and People of the earth.

There is, in fact, both in history and in the Allegory, a twofold aspect in which we may regard the Church and her establishment in the world as the religion of kings and people.

The Church, so far as she preserves the truth and promotes the salvation of individuals, and so answers the ends for which she was first instituted and then established as the religion of Christendom, is the work of God and the Bride of the Lamb. So far as she allows worldly power to corrupt her, she acts as a Harlot and as the instrument of Satan.

The good and evil elements of which the One Catholic Church consists, although really as distinct as light and darkness, cannot by man's judgment be separated one from another in this world. We may not call any one Communion or any one National Church the Pure Woman ; and some other, the Harlot. Neither do these two women ever appear together on the same scene in the Apocalyptic Allegory. The fact that the One Catholic Church has been divided into separate Communions does not enable us to distinguish at all more clearly between the wheat and the tares, which are always growing side by side in the Kingdom of God. It is a great misfortune that the Church has been so divided ; but we shall not lessen the misfortune by uncharitable judgments of the members of a Communion

separated from our own. There are, doubtless, in the Roman Communion countless living members of Christ who will hereafter be members of that Church which will one day be revealed as the Pure Woman, the Bride of the Lamb. And we have every reason to fear that there are many members of reformed communions who, though emancipated from the thraldom of the Pope, are yet deeply stained with that world-worship, that alliance with the Beast, the enemy and rival of the Lamb, in which the whoredom of the Church mainly consists.

It is the will of God that good and evil should be intimately mixed together in this world, until the great Harvest of the world is ripe ; and that even the great drag-net of the Gospel should contain the good and bad until it reaches the shores of Eternity.

It is, however, an historical fact that the City of Papal Rome was the acknowledged Head of the Whole Western Church for many ages preceding the Reformation ; and that even since that time she has been acknowledged as such by the great majority of professing Christians. The City of Rome also is represented in this Allegory as a Harlot committing fornication with the Kings and People of the earth. So far, therefore, as National Churches or individual Christians support her unwarrantable claims to universal dominion and infallibility, and so far as they practise or inculcate her idolatrous rites and world-worship, they answer the description of those who partake of her fornications, and are made drunk with the cup of her filthiness ; they partake of her sins, and will also probably have their share of her punishment. And so far as National Churches or individual Christians protest against her claims, deny her infallibility, and abhor and forsake her sins, idolatry, and world-worship, whether they are separate from her communion or not, they are amongst those who bear their testimony in sackcloth, and get the victory over

the Beast, and his Image, and his Mark, and the Number of his Name ; they belong to "the remnant of the faithful woman's seed," and in the end shall be living stones in the other Great City of which the prophet speaks, the New, the Holy, and the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Ezekiel certainly represents the Jewish Church under the emblem of one and the same woman. She is pure at the commencement. She forsakes her God, and becomes a harlot. But this whoredom does not cut her off from God's enduring and infinitely superhuman love. He causes her lovers to despise her and make her desolate. And then He accepts her as His own again.

The Apocalypse may seem to differ from Ezekiel in having Two Emblems instead of one ; in representing throughout the Pure Church as a Pure Woman, and the corrupt Church as a Harlot. But this difference is only apparent. Historically, it is impossible, at any period of her existence, to divide the Christian Church into the Pure Church and the corrupt Church ; the distinctions of good and evil are never so traceable in this world. And in the Allegory, as we have seen, although two emblems appear to be used, they are never together on the same scene. When we lose sight of the one, then the other appears. When the Pure Woman flees into the wilderness to be fed there a stated time, then immediately a Harlot appears in a wilderness, supported by the Kings of the earth. When the Harlot has been judged, and God's people called out of her, then the Bride of the Lamb appears arrayed in fine linen. True Christians and hypocrites are as different as light and darkness ; but they are all, in this world, members of the Same One Church, therefore one emblem stands for them regarded as a whole. When the hypocrites form the large majority, the Church is called a Harlot ; and when judgment has swept them all away, the Faithful Remnant are called the Bride of Christ.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT APOSTASY

We are approaching the close of that part of the Apocalyptic Allegory which has been called the Allegory of the Rider upon a White Horse. It is an Allegory or figurative description of real history, the history of the Warfare of Christ with Satan, of the Warfare of Christianity with the World, of the doctrines of the Gospel with the evil principles of human nature. The Hero of this Drama is Christ, the Rider on the White Horse. His opponents are, the Devil or the Great Serpent; the World-power or the Seven-headed, Ten-horned Beast; and a corrupt, idolatrous, world-worshipping, saint-persecuting Hierarchy. The symbol of this latter form of evil is "the Great City," called generally Babylon the Harlot, but in one peculiar vision the Christ-crucifying Jerusalem, Sodom[1] and Egypt. If Jerusalem is the symbol of Roman Christendom, then it is consistent that she should be called the city in which Our Lord was crucified; for He was crucified in a Roman Province and by a Roman Ruler.

The acts and scenes of this Drama relate to the whole of

[1] "Memini hanc quidem Babylonem propter confusionem dici et in Apocalypsi et in Esaia; et Ezekiel Sodomam nominavit. Denique si compares quæ contra Sodomam dicta sunt, et quæ Esaias contra Babylonem dicit, quæque Apocalypsis, unum esse omnia invenies."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

Christendom, both Eastern and Western, although some of the visions dwell more exclusively on the great Latin or Western Hierarchy. But in the case of every series of visions, such as the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, or the Seven Vials, we find that the last two relate to events in which the whole world is concerned.

The mighty Earthquake of the Sixth Seal, and the great battles of the Sixth Trumpet and Sixth Vial, although the overthrow of the corrupt Western Hierarchy is a prominent event foreshadowed by them, cannot be confined to that event, but must prefigure also some more general catastrophe.

The Four Destructive Winds which are held back from hurting the earth in the 7th chapter; and the Four Destructive Angels with their armies, which are loosed at the voice of the Sixth Trumpet, must relate to some very general and wide-spreading judgment. And in the vision of the Sixth Vial "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" are gathered "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

In the 17th chapter also the Ten Kings, who combine with the One Final Antichrist, make a general and open war with the Lamb until He overcomes them; and in the course of that warfare (just before their own destruction by the Rider upon the White Horse with the armies that ride with Him out of heaven) they destroy Babylon, the Papal Roman City, the Head of the great Hierarchy of the West.[1]

These, then, are the two great subjects of all the closing visions of this part of the Apocalypse; the last great open warfare of the world with the Religion of Jesus, and in the

[1] "Decem cornibus decem diademata affigit. Nam, quemadmodum infra cap. xvii. dicetur, decem reges, hoc est, universi reges ac principes potestatem suam Bestiæ suppeditabunt, qui unam cum Bestia voluntatem habebunt, extinguendi nimirum nominis Christi."—Bullinger, *Com. in Apoc.*

course of that warfare, or shortly before its commencement, the Fall of the Great Papal Hierarchy, and the destruction of its Capital City.

We find that the words of Scripture leave us little room to doubt the approach of a most wide-spreading and fearful falling away from Christianity, accompanied possibly by persecution of faithful Christians, before the Second Advent of Christ.

And are there not already many ominous signs of its approach? Christianity, as a dominant religion, has had its day of power like Judaism of old, and is rapidly losing its political hold upon the world. There is reason to hope that this apostasy is still remote. There is nothing in Scripture to lead us to expect it immediately. But, setting prophecy out of the question, the tendency of things to this result is evident to every serious observer.

This great Apostasy and the causes which, beginning to work from the earliest ages, shall at last bring it about, are pointed out by prophecies of two kinds, literal and figurative.

The prophecies of Our Saviour Himself are of a mixed character, partly literal and partly figurative.

Observing how the Apostles admired the external splendour of the Temple, He told them that in a short time not one stone would be left upon another. This prophecy excited their minds and led them to ask these remarkable questions: "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"[1]

The time had not yet come for the perfect enlightenment of the minds of the Disciples. Christ had many things to say to them, but they could not bear them yet. Their Jewish education rendered them incapable of entering

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 3.

into the perfect spirit of prophecy until the Holy Ghost had descended upon them. But Our Saviour answers these two questions by one general prophecy, involving all the principles of prophecy to be given afterwards in a more systematic although less literal manner in the Apocalypse.

If we analyse carefully this general prophecy, we shall find that it corresponds in a very remarkable manner with the history of the Christian World, of the influence of Christianity upon the world, and of the position and fortunes of the Church in the world, up to the present time.

The founder of a false religion would have represented his religion as triumphant and accepted by the world, at any rate in the end if not at the commencement. But Our Saviour gives us a very different picture of its state during the continuance of the world, and speaks of its Triumph as deferred until the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead.

Setting aside those expressions which refer in their literal sense only to Jerusalem, though perhaps in a figurative sense to the Christian Church, we find that Our Saviour predicts in plain language the following historical facts :

1. That there shall always, and especially as the End approaches, be false teachers and false prophets ; that they shall deceive, if it be possible, even the Elect by their lying miracles ; and that many of these shall try to deceive men by false prophecies of the Second Advent, "saying, I am he, and the time is at hand."[1] How common have been these forms of deception ! How notorious have been and still are the lying miracles of Rome, deceiving many pious persons and provoking others to disbelieve altogether ! Superstition and Priestcraft are the parents of Infidelity. Then there has hardly ever been a great war or violent civil

[1] St. Luke xxi. 8.

tumult which has not produced its prophets, "saying . . . the time is at hand."

2. Therefore Our Saviour tells His disciples that the general conditions of human society will not be changed by His Religion. In the social and in the natural world, all things shall go on as usual. There shall be wars and rumours of wars, and famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. These things are not to move the Christian or to make him fancy the end at hand. They are but the beginnings of sorrows, the Divine methods of punishing the wicked world for sin. The last and more fearful punishments will not take place until Christ suddenly comes. Here, then, is an end of the dream of an Earthly Paradise, or Literal Millennium. There is no reason indeed why this earth should not be the seat of the blest after the fires of the Last Judgment have devoured the wicked. And then perhaps some of the figurative Hebrew prophecies may receive a more literal fulfilment than is generally expected. But this is simply a curious and innocent speculation, the truth of which can never be ascertained; and would be of no real consequence for us to know even if it could be proved beyond question. Our Paradise is the Presence of Christ, be it on this earth or on the remotest planet of our system.

Our Saviour's prophecy is inconsistent with any notion of a Millennial Reign of Himself in Person upon this earth, previous to the general resurrection of the dead and the final separation of the evil from the good. He distinctly tells us that human strife and bloodshed shall continue up to the very Day of His Coming, notwithstanding the preaching of His peaceful doctrines to every creature under heaven.

3. Our Lord further declares that the condition of the faithful disciple up to the very end, and especially when the

end is near, shall be one of distress and persecution; that in consequence of this many shall stumble and fall away, and shall betray, and hate, and even kill one another; that because iniquity (*ἀνομία*) shall abound the love of many shall wax cold; but that he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

4. He assures His disciples that, notwithstanding these persecutions, they shall be protected under them, that not the slightest evil shall happen to them without His permission. "There shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."[1]

5. But although faithful Christians shall be so persecuted, and the Christian world so torn with strife and bloodshed, nothing shall check the spread of Christ's Religion. The preaching of the Gospel shall go on and on, age after age, until it has become a witness unto the whole world, and then shall the end come. He does not say the Gospel will be accepted, and its maxims allowed to heal the sores of human society; far from it. The troubles of the world increase as its light increases; until, there being no longer any excuse for ignorance, the harvest of the earth becomes fully ripe, and the Angel of Judgment thrusts in the sharp sickle of eternal vengeance. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."[2]

6. Next, under His literal description of the flight of Christians out of the overthrow of ancient Jerusalem by the Romans, it seems most probable that Our Saviour points figuratively to the calling of faithful Christians out of the overthrow of Babylon just before the end of the world. As the believing Jews escaped from the fearful judgment of their corrupt city when it was encompassed and destroyed by the armies of the Roman Emperor, so in the Apocalypse

[1] St. Luke xxi. 18, 19. [2] St. Matt. xxiv. 14.

the people of God are called out of the corrupt Christian city when the Kings of the earth surround and destroy her.

7. Then comes the end. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." [1] And from the parable of the sheep and the goats we learn, that He shall then separate finally the wicked and the good, and assign to each, neither a purgatory nor a Millennium, but a final sentence of weal or woe: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." [2]

Our Saviour, then, leads us to expect a falling away and persecution of Christians and great tribulation as the end approaches. The faithful Christian will be always tried, but his trials will be greater towards the end. And He speaks also of the causes of this apostasy: false teaching, lying miracles, and the increase of iniquity.

The prophecies of St. Paul are more literal. He speaks of the revelation of the Man of Sin, the Wicked One (ὁ ἄνομος). And he shows what causes have been in operation from the very beginning to produce this concentration of malice just before the Coming of Christ. He ascribes it to a long course of Satanic working showing itself in false doctrines and lying miracles and judicial blindness. He elsewhere specifies some of these false doctrines, "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats." [3] He also mentions some special sins which should accompany the apostasy of the latter days, self-love, covetousness, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, want of natural affection, want of honour, love of pleasure more than God.[4]

St. Paul's "lawless one" has often been supposed to

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 29, 30. [2] St. Matt. xxv. 46.
[3] 1 Tim. iv. 3. [4] 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3, 4.

mean the Pope. And certainly there are many marks which may seem to justify the assertion. But the most wicked and worldly Pope has scarcely come up to this description, "that man of sin . . . who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."[1] The Pope certainly puts forth a most groundless and therefore blasphemous claim to universal dominion. But he does not oppose himself openly to God. He is an evil minister: a minister bearing authority but exceeding it. The Pope is the Beast with Lamb's Horns and the deceitful voice of the Serpent. He is not that other Beast who combines with Ten Kings to fight against the Lamb openly and to destroy Babylon. The Pope during a long period is Satan's instrument to promote superstition and to work lying miracles and so to support all the despots of the earth, to make all men worship the Ten-horned Beast, and his Imperial Image and Head.

St. Paul's Man of Sin, therefore, can scarcely be the Pope; can scarcely be the Lamb-like Beast. He is rather The Beast to whom is given a mouth speaking great things; the Great Head of the World-power; the last Great Imperial Image of Ancient Rome, who shall fight against the Lamb, and also in the course of that war destroy the Pope's City and Hierarchy, resting once on popular support and the power of many despots, built up during the Middle Ages by blasphemous pretensions and lying miracles, but robbed of these supports at last by the infidelity of kings and people, and made desolate and naked by those with whom she had sinned.

It is important to distinguish between these three elements of the system of Christendom, the Pope, the Emperor, and the ten-fold family of Christian princes. Each of these elements has its proper and distinct symbol

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

in the Apocalypse, and much confusion follows if they are not kept distinct one from another.

Now, the last enemy of the Lamb is the Last of the Imitators of Ancient Rome, the last of those Princes who strive to gain universal dominion. And it is predicted in a manner which cannot well be mistaken that this last great Antichrist will join with many other princes to persecute the Church and destroy the Papal Hierarchy.

The Papal system, its lying miracles, its encouragement of superstition, its meddling and intriguing policy, has long been preparing for the disclosure of this Man of Sin; and therefore St. Paul describes his approach as prepared even from the beginning by a long course of Satanic working: "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." "The mystery of iniquity doth already work."[1]

St. Paul is evidently speaking of the great apostasy which shall be the sign to the faithful that the end is just at hand. And his Man of Sin is that lawless persecutor who shall fight out the last battle of the world with Christianity, who shall indeed overcome the saints and destroy even the most corrupt portion of the Christian Church, but shall himself be destroyed by "the spirit of" the Lord's "breath" and "by the brightness of His coming." In the language of the Apocalypse he is the Beast that ariseth out of the Abyss and goeth into perdition. In the language of Daniel he is that Mighty Little Horn, on account of whose "great words the beast was slain, and his body was given to the burning flame."[2]

This is evidently the main subject of St. Paul's prophecy. Much that he says, therefore, applies to that Satanic working, to those lying miracles, to that gross superstition of which the Popes have been the chief instruments, but the

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 7, 9, 10. [2] Dan. vii. 11.

principal character in his prophecy, THE LAWLESS ONE, is not a Pope, but Antichrist, a Worldly Power.

He may indeed bear the name of Christian. For it is very improbable that the name of Christian will ever be given up by Despotic Rulers. And some such Ruler, clearly identifying himself with Antichrist, will, we may be sure, rise up in Christendom when the time for his disclosure has arrived.

It is idle to speculate from what country he will come, or to imagine any details whatever about him. The Principle is the only thing which can possibly be derived from the mysterious language of unfulfilled prophecy. And that Principle, that general fact, is clear enough. A Man of Sin, a Son of Perdition, a Lawless One, will be disclosed in the last age of the present dispensation, who will openly fight against the cause of God, and be destroyed by the sudden appearance of Christ.

St. Paul's prophecy, then, may be regarded as a sort of inspired commentary upon the prophecy of Our Lord, extracting from it, as it were, its general elements, and passing over those points which related more immediately to ancient Jerusalem and only in a secondary and typical sense to Christian times and the forerunners of the Second Advent.

St. Paul predicts these general facts:

1. That a great apostasy shall immediately precede the Second Advent.

2. That a great and powerful "LAWLESS ONE" shall be the Head of this apostasy.

3. That a long course of Satanic working, commencing even in apostolic times, shall prepare the way for his development.

4. That lying miracles and strong delusions of superstition, "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain

from meats," shall be amongst the symptoms of that Satanic working.

5. That the "lawless one" shall oppose God, and himself claim Divine Attributes.

6. That he shall be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's Advent.

We see, therefore, that the prophecies of Our Lord, and of St. Paul, agree in stating that there shall be a great Apostasy before the Second Advent, and that false teachers, working lying miracles, shall prepare the way for it.

Our Saviour, as we have seen, adds another sign of His approaching Advent. Alluding to some great tribulation, He says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other." [1]

Immediately after the tribulation of what days?

There can be no doubt that Our Saviour was speaking literally of those days when Jerusalem should be encompassed with armies; when, in the distress and overthrow of that corrupt city, the converted Jews should escape to the mountains.

But it is equally certain that these words must have a second and figurative interpretation, and that this secondary sense was more prominently before His mind than the literal meaning of His words. He was thinking of that Great City, that Great Jerusalem of the Christian Hierarchy, which He afterwards called Egypt, and Sodom, and Babylon, and the City of His Crucifixion, in the Apocalypse. He was thinking of that Last Great Ruler of the World, whose armies shall encompass Babylon and destroy her, just before

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 29–31.

His Own Second Coming to judge the world. He was thinking of the more fearful tribulation and persecution of those days, which He will shorten in mercy by His Advent, lest all flesh should be destroyed.

It is impossible to confine Our Saviour's expressions to the destruction of Ancient Jerusalem ; and if so, then they must refer to the destruction of the Apocalyptic City, which is called the Christ-crucifying Jerusalem, Egypt, Sodom, and Babylon.

We have already considered why Our Saviour shrouded His prophecy of the events of the Second Advent under typical language, relating in its literal sense to Ancient Jerusalem. His Disciples could not yet have understood any more spiritual prophecy: and they were also more immediately concerned with the destruction of the literal Jewish City. Yet it is evident that they must have understood Our Lord to be speaking of the end of the age, although they probably thought, from His words, that this event would immediately follow the destruction of Jerusalem.

Their question related to both these events, which they seem to have connected intimately together in their minds. "Tell us," they say, "when shall these things be?" When shall the temple be destroyed? "And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"

Their question then being double, it is natural to conclude that Our Saviour's very general and unsystematic answer should be double also, relating partly to the destruction of Jerusalem and partly to the End of the World.

But the answer which He gave in this general and unsystematic manner to the unenlightened Disciples on the Mount of Olives He imparted in an allegorical, but most systematic manner, to the whole Church through the subsequent visions of one of these holy men, in the island of Patmos.

He there again introduces Jerusalem, encompassed with the armies of the worldly rulers, long trodden underfoot by the Gentiles, and at last destroyed by them just before His Own Advent to judge the world.

How manifest, then, is the connection between the prophecies of St. Paul, the prophecies of Our Saviour, and the prophecies of the Apocalypse, on these great and most important subjects, the Last Great Apostasy, the destruction of the corrupt Hierarchy, and the Second Advent !

Our Saviour and St. Paul both ascribe this great Apostasy to a long course of Satanic working, showing itself in false teaching, antichrists, and lying miracles. And Our Saviour warns His disciples to flee when they see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and tells them that He will come in the clouds of heaven shortly after the destruction of that Great City.

And now, what does the Apocalyptic Allegory reveal on these subjects ?

The Sixth Trumpet announces the release of Four Destroying Angels, with their numerous armies, from a state of detention upon the Banks of the River, which prevented their entry into the Great City.

The Temple Vision connected with this Trumpet shows us the judgment of the corrupt Jerusalem ; the Holy City trodden underfoot by the Gentiles ; the Church long in alliance with and corrupted by the Beast or World-power ; the great Sodom, Egypt, or Babylon, in which the World-power, represented by the Beast, had persecuted for a long time, and at last slain and silenced the Witnesses of Christ. The Beast slays and silences the Witnesses, and the World rejoices over their fall. This is the great Apostasy. Then the Witnesses rise again, and ascend into heaven ; and the same hour the great corrupt Jerusalem is punished, the

Last Trumpet sounds, and the dead are judged. In that great convulsion, which overthrows the corrupt Jerusalem, many are slain, and a few repent and glorify God. "In the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." [1]

The Sixth and Seventh Vials, with the visions connected with them, reveal the same events. The Euphrates is dried up. The Popular Support is withdrawn from Rome. The way of her destroyers is made ready. This way is prepared by a general Apostasy of kings and people, the result of three causes, which Our Saviour and St. Paul mention, and predict as about to be always in operation, but especially so towards the end.

These three causes are the Doctrines of Satan, the Doctrines of the world, and the Doctrines of false teachers of Religion; symbolised in the Apocalypse, consistently with all the rest of its imagery, and in allusion to the plague of frogs, as Three Unclean Spirits issuing out of the Mouth of the Serpent, and out of the Mouth of the Beast, and out of the Mouth of the False Prophet.[2]

Lying miracles are ascribed to these unclean spirits; and their work is that of collecting kings and people to fight against God. "They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." [3] In plainer words, the working of Satan, the maxims of worldly policy, and the lying miracles of Rome at last bring about a fearful state of infidelity, and the disclosure of St. Paul's Man of Sin, who opposes all that is called God, or that is worshipped, drawing all worship to himself.

Then follows, as a necessary consequence of infidelity,

[1] Rev. xi. 13. [2] Rev. xvi. 13. [3] Rev. xvi. 14.

the Fall of the Corrupt Hierarchy; "and Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." [1]

But, as we could not otherwise understand the symbols, Euphrates, the Kings of the East, and the Great City, the 17th chapter is introduced to explain them.

We have learned from this vision that Babylon is the Papacy; that, therefore, Euphrates represents the Popular Support which long averts its ruin; that the Kings of the East are the Rulers of the world, who lead the Great Apostasy; who fight against the Lamb up to the day of His Advent; and who, at some time before that Advent, destroy the Hierarchy. And so the destroyers of Rome are the Apostates from God and the enemies of the Lamb. There are three distinct instruments of Satan symbolised in the Apocalypse: the Beast; the Ten Horns of the Beast; and the Beast with Two Horns like those of a Lamb, or the False Prophet. The Beast is St. Paul's Man of Sin, the Head of the God-opposing World-power; his Ten Horns are those independent kings who combine with him to fight against the Lamb and to destroy Babylon; the Two-horned Beast, or False Prophet, is the Pope, and Babylon is his City, the Papal City and Hierarchy or Roman Christendom.

Babylon is a corrupted Church, but she has many saints in her; she embraces indeed in her communion by far the largest number of Christians, and we cannot regard all those Christians as involved in the guilt of her sins. As well might we make all the Jews guilty of the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees and the Blood of the Crucified Jesus. No. Babylon is Rome. But like Egypt and Babylon of old, she contains within her the majority, in all probability, of

[1] Rev. xvi. 19.

the people of God, of the members of the future Heavenly Jerusalem.

In ancient Jerusalem many of the priests and people believed and were saved. And no unbelief, no idolatry, no wickedness of a Church can render of none effect the promises of God made to the faithful and penitent members of her communion. There is much deep, earnest, and vital religion in the Roman Catholic Communion ; much that is wise and good and conducive to humility and holiness in the system, bad as it is in many most important particulars. We must recognise the good, although we see the evil, in the Roman Communion ; not in the Papal system, but in the Roman Church, which embraces within its fold so large a number of Christian men and women.

But notwithstanding this, we may say, in the warning words of Our Saviour, to every faithful Christian in the Roman Communion, "When ye see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then flee to the mountains." When ye see the Infidel Kings of the earth preparing to destroy your Babylon, then as a matter of prudence and piety listen to the warning words of the same Saviour in the Apocalypse, "Come out of her, my people." You are called God's people though you dwell in Babylon. You must know how great have been the sins of Popes, how monstrous and ungrounded their temporal claims, even though you of course believe in their right to spiritual supremacy. We say, then, come out of her. If you do not leave her communion bear a fearless testimony, as many have done in all ages, against her obvious sins. "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; all things therefore whatsoever they command you, these observe and do, but do not after their works."

Protestants with good reason do not think that the Pope sits in Christ's or even in Peter's seat, more than any other

bishop. But though you believe that he does, yet remember that he must speak consistently with the Spirit of Christ, revealed in the Holy Scriptures, or, if he speaks otherwise, you obey him at your peril. If, then, you remain in communion with Rome, abhor the novel doctrines she has invented, the false and puerile miracles she still continues even in this age of light to exhibit before the people, the idols she worships, and the claims to temporal power she puts forth. These things have nothing to do with Christianity, and they serve only to bring the Church into contempt; to encourage the superstition of the ignorant; and to drive the enlightened to infidelity, and derision even of those truly Christian doctrines on which Popes have engrafted these worse than follies.

Many earnest Christians in the Roman Communion do not believe in the Pope's infallibility, nor in his lying miracles; and these no doubt will all be ready, when the fearful time comes for Babylon to be thrown down, to obey the calling of prophecy, to come out of her, and escape her plagues.

There is nothing uncharitable in saying that Papal Rome is the Apocalyptic Babylon. It is merely saying that she is following the example of the ancient Jewish Church. And is not this notorious?

Why, then, is it more uncharitable in us to call Papal Rome a Harlot, than it was in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to call the ancient Jewish Church by the same opprobrious name? Did these prophets mean by the expression that the Jewish Church had ceased to be a Church, or that she contained no saints in her? Nothing of the kind. These prophets themselves remained in her communion. They could not do otherwise. But did they lose their souls by so doing? Surely not. They partook of the same Altar, they worshipped in the same Temple,

they hoped in the same promises, and they were saved, with thousands of others, with all sincere Jews, by means of these promises. But they abhorred the sins of their Church. And what sincere and pious Roman Catholic does not do the same? Where is it said in the Apocalypse that all who dwell in the accursed city shall be lost?

The Witnesses bear witness in it, although, like the prophets of old, they are at last slain in its streets for their testimony. The people of God are in it up to the end, for God calls them out of it just before He destroys it. There is certainly great danger in belonging to an idolatrous communion. For it is written, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." But there is danger in every communion which contains any false doctrines. For false doctrine is made by the wicked an excuse for sin, and for withdrawing the heart from God. But Christ declares that the elect, the honest and good heart, in every communion, cannot be so deceived by falsehoods as to perish by them. That is to say, they will never make them excuses for putting aside the genuine work of religion, the religion of the heart. "If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." [1]

And, still further, it is evident from the prophecy that many of those who remain in the Wicked City, and so experience her punishment by the Kings of the earth, will by that judgment be brought to repentance, and so will escape her final condemnation. When the Papal Hierarchy has been demolished, there will remain many faithful Christians to glorify God by repentance. For in the fall of the city "there were slain of men seven thousand," but "the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven." [2]

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 24. [2] Rev. xi. 13.

There is, then, nothing at all uncharitable in saying that Rome is the Harlot of the Apocalypse. The Roman Hierarchy has doubtless acted even more like a Harlot than the Ancient Jewish Church did. But, like that ancient city, she is still the Holy City, the City which contains many saints and has the promises of God for the salvation of those saints.

But it will be said by many, Papal Rome cannot be the Apocalyptic Babylon, for the world weeps over her fall as over the fall of a great commercial city.

It is true indeed that the 18th chapter of the Revelation contains nothing else but a highly figurative and poetical lamentation over the sudden fall of Babylon ; and that the expressions are almost all those which men would make use of in lamenting the fall of a great seafaring commercial city. But the Apocalypse is an Allegory, and as such must be interpreted with reference to those well-known principles upon which all allegories are composed.

Babylon is not the ancient Chaldæan City, but the Roman City. The many waters of the Euphrates are not the river of that name, nor any river at all ; but, as the prophecy itself declares, the Popular Support of Rome. The Kings of the East, who enter the city when the waters are dried up, are not the Medes and Persians who marched into Babylon when they had drained off the waters of Euphrates, but they are the Kings of the earth in the latter days, who, in consequence of the withdrawal of popular support from Rome, are able to destroy her.

And now, after all this, how inconsistent it would be if the language of the lamentation over Babylon were taken from any other source than the lamentations of the ancient prophets over the fall of Chaldæan Babylon !

Any one, who reads the 18th chapter of the Apocalypse in a Bible with marginal references, will see that there is scarcely an exclamation of sorrow or indignation which is

not taken almost word for word from the poetic dirges of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or some other ancient prophet.

There are, in fact, Two Great Epochs of Jewish history which supply the imagery of the Apocalyptic Allegory. These are the Exodus from Egypt and the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, and their return to their own land to rebuild Jerusalem.

The images of the former Trumpets and Vials are taken chiefly from the Exodus, and those of the latter from the destruction of Babylon and deliverance of God's people. Yet these two events are not kept distinct one from another. The Great City is not only called Babylon, but also Sodom and Egypt, and even the Christ-crucifying Jerusalem. It is called Sodom, because it is immoral ; Egypt and Babylon, because it is idolatrous and also tyrannical, enslaving God's people ; and, lastly, it is called the corrupt Christ-crucifying Jerusalem in allusion to our Saviour's own prophecy, and also in allusion to that contrast which St. Paul draws between the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Again, although the latter Trumpets and Vials speak of the drying up of Euphrates and so carry our thoughts to Chaldæa, the Sixth Vial takes us again to Egypt, to the plague of frogs.

Neither are the images in this song of lamentation taken exclusively from the dirges uttered over Babylon ; they also occur in the prophecies that relate to Nineveh and Tyre, and perhaps other great cities.

The introduction of merchants and seafaring men lamenting her fall is simply consistent with her previous description as a city "sitting upon many waters." Babylon of old was one of the wealthiest of cities, and her mighty river was one of the sources of her wealth. Jeremiah thus addresses her: "O thou that dwellest upon many waters,

abundant in treasures, thine end is come." [1] Something, therefore, would have been omitted in the Allegorical picture if, when her mourners were so graphically described, the merchants, her chief mourners, had been passed over in silence, as though they were indifferent to her fall.

And now how consistently does the whole Allegory conclude with the vision of the New Jerusalem! Babylon has been destroyed; God's people have been called out of her; and then what follows?

There is a great proclamation of Salvation. "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God." [2] This salvation has come, they say, because the Great Babylon is judged, and because henceforth "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;" and because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." [3]

Then comes the end; the Last Great Scene of the Allegory of the Rider on the White Horse. The great Hero of the Drama comes forth again: comes, that is, really and visibly to the earth. For as Christ truly came in humility at first, when the Rider on the White Horse first rode forth to victory, so shall He truly come in glory in the end, as He is here represented before the eyes of St. John. He comes to judge the world. He comes to destroy all His enemies and to consign them to their eternal death. He comes to destroy the "Man of Sin" by the brightness of His appearing. He comes to take the Beast and the False Prophet, and all who are their slaves, and to cast them into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

But He does not come alone. Alone He came at first—alone He fought and conquered. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." But

[1] Jer. li. 13. [2] Rev. xix. 1. [3] Rev. xix. 7.

He comes with many followers on His Second and Glorious Advent. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His Saints." He comes with all those who have fought and conquered in His Name. They have suffered with Him, therefore together with Him shall they be glorified also. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war . . . . and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean. . . . And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them which had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These were both cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse." [1]

Here, then, is the end of this part of the Allegory, of the Drama of the Rider upon the White Horse. The Papal Hierarchy is destroyed, the False Prophet has perished, the powers of the world and all who worship them are cast alive into the pit.

But what of the great secret author of their crimes? What of the Devil? Does he escape? Before the Holy City is shown us, the New Jerusalem, a parenthetical vision is introduced, a new scene is made to pass before the Seer's eyes.[2] The veil is, as it were, drawn aside, his place of concealment is thrown open, the Archfiend himself is

[1] Rev. xix. 11, 21.

[2] "Recapitulans ab origine, plenius exponit quomodo supra dixerit, Bestia quam vidisti: fuit, et non est, et ascensura est de abysso, et in interitum ibit."—Bede, *in loc.*

exposed to view. We behold that awful being who, lying behind the scenes, pulls all the wires of evil, and sets in motion the instruments of his will.

Such is the vision of the 20th chapter. It shows us the real source of all those forms of evil on which we have been successively gazing; it unfolds, under very intelligible figures, Satan's machinations, his perdition, and the blessedness of all who conquer him.

The full consideration of this vision requires a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRUE MILLENNIUM

THE 20th chapter of the Revelation is very mysterious and highly figurative in its language. Now is it either safe or right to interpret one mysterious passage in such a manner as to make it evidently contradict many plain ones? This would be the case if we should maintain that the Holy Spirit wishes us to understand, by the figurative expressions here used, that at His Second Advent Christ will reign with His Saints a thousand years. Nothing can be plainer than the often-repeated assertions of Scripture on this subject. It is constantly and plainly declared: 1. That Jesus Christ will come again; 2. That His Advent will be immediately followed by the general Resurrection and Judgment of all men. The following may be selected out of the many passages of Holy Writ which clearly demonstrate these two points.

Christ Himself says, "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." And then what follows? Not a reign of a thousand years; but, "And before him shall be gathered all nations." Next succeeds the Judgment and final separation of the good from the evil; after which it is written, "And these shall go away

into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."[1]

Again, it is distinctly asserted by St. Peter that Jesus must remain in heaven until the restitution of all things: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things."[2]

From the former of these passages we learn that when Jesus comes He will judge the world, in order that the wicked and good may go to their respective places for ever; and from the latter, that He will remain in heaven until the restitution of all things. Where is there, then, room for a reign of a thousand years? Thus St. Paul writes, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "The hour is coming," says Our Saviour, "in the which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;" not to a Millennium; but, "they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."[3] He also foreshows, by the parable of the Tares and other parables, that the wicked and the good will not be separated at all before the Day of Judgment. Now without such a separation the Millennial reign could not take place. And so our Church, in strict accordance with the words of inspiration, by many expressions in her Creeds and Liturgy, denies the anti-Scriptural and fanciful notion of a Millennium, and asserts, in the language of the Athanasian Creed, that "at Christ's coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 31, 46. [2] Acts iii. 19–21.
[3] St. John v. 28, 29.

they that have done evil into everlasting fire." In rejecting this revival of Judaism, our Church is countenanced by almost all the more eminent Continental Reformers, as well as by the great majority of early Christian writers.

But let us turn to the chapter supposed to predict so strange a state of things. We find there no grounds for an opinion so contrary, as we have seen, to the rest of Scripture. A first resurrection is indeed spoken of. But what kind of resurrection? Of the body? Surely not. A resurrection of the soul. "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the Beast, neither his Image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."[1] What can be more consistent with St. John's language than to suppose the resurrection here spoken of to be the spiritual resurrection of the soul from sin to holiness,[2] and its subsequent admission after the death of the body into the Paradise of which Our Saviour spoke to the penitent thief, and which He also calls "Abraham's bosom," and describes as a place of rest and happiness? And what has this to do with the general resurrection of the bodies of good and bad, so often mentioned in Scripture as accompanying or immediately following the second appearance of Christ?

A similar expression is used by St. Paul, in his Epistle

[1] Rev. xx. 4.

[2] "Quicunque toto isto tempore quo agitur prima resurrectio, id est animarum, non audierunt vocem Filii Dei, et ad vitam de morte transierunt, profecto in secunda resurrectione, quæ carnis est, in secundam mortem, id est æterna tormenta, cum ipsa carne transibunt."—Bede, *in loc.*

"Duæ sunt resurrectiones: sed prima resurrectio nunc est animarum per fidem, quæ non permittit homines transire ad mortem secundam."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

to the Colossians, to describe the privileges of the Gospel. He speaks of a great spiritual change and resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This, he says, takes place in all faithful Christians; commencing in all at their baptism, but being perfected afterwards only in such as yield obedience to the secret impulses of the Holy Spirit. "Ye are complete in him," he writes, "which is the head of all principality and power; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."[1] And again addressing the same persons, he says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."[2] In like manner St. John speaks of the state of grace as life, and that of sin as death: the former being more truly life, the latter more truly death in the sight of God than the natural life or natural death of the body. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."[3]

But not only does St. Paul speak of this same spiritual resurrection of the soul from sin to righteousness; he also plainly alludes to a kingdom of Christians and a reign with Christ, in the following words: "Ye are come," that is, faithful Christians are come, "unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits," not the bodies but the spirits, "of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."[4] Now none have ever imagined that these and many similar expressions are intended to describe a literal resurrection, a literal dwelling with Christ in a literal City or Kingdom.

[1] Col. ii. 12.
[2] Col. iii. 1, 3.
[3] 1 John iii. 14.
[4] Heb. xii. 22–24.

Why, then, should the language of St. John be differently understood?[1]

The thousand years also here mentioned need not mean exactly that number, but a long and indefinite period;[2] just as we elsewhere read of the Lord keeping His promise "to a thousand generations," and showing mercy "unto thousands." And, as David says, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

But, on the other hand, it may be that the period of a thousand years is intended to be literally understood. Hengstenberg, although generally opposed to the notion that there are chronological prophecies in the Apocalypse, is yet evidently of opinion that this period of a thousand years, so far as it refers to the main point in the vision, the imprisonment of Satan and his subsequent release, is to be literally and historically applied to that time during which Christianity was the Dominant Religion of the world. He thinks that the thousand years commenced with the final and complete establishment of Christianity in Europe. He believes that Satan was bound in the age of Charlemagne, and loosed at the French Revolution; observing that exactly a thousand years elapsed between those great epochs. He understands the binding of Satan to refer

[1] The ancient Christians considered that the kingdom of Christ began when He ascended into heaven.

"Ἀνθυπατεύοντος Στρατίου Κοδράτου, βασιλεύοντος δὲ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ." Eccles. Smyr. Epist. de S. Polycarpi Martyrio, c. xxi. See Jacobson's note on the passage. "Regnante Domino nostro Jesu Christo." Passio Symphorosæ. *Bib. Vet. Pat. Gallandii*, vol. i. p. 329.

[2] "Regnat Ecclesia cum Christo in vivis et mortuis. . . . Simul de vivis et mortuis debemus accipere, qui, sive adhuc in ista mortali carne viventes, sive defuncti, regnant cum Christo, jam nunc modo quodam tempori huic congruo, per totum hoc intervallum quod numero mille significatur annorum."—Bede, *in loc.*

chiefly to his being providentially hindered from keeping the nations in a state of Paganism and open opposition to the Christian Church. He considers the loosing of Satan to relate to the withdrawal of those Providential restraints.

This, indeed, seems to be the most probable and Scriptural interpretation of this chapter, and is also quite borne out by the language of the prophecy.

One object of the vision is certainly the consolation of the Saints and Martyrs, not by any promise of a reign with Christ upon the earth, for the earth is not even mentioned in connection with them, and they are distinctly said, before they reign, to have been killed and therefore removed from the earth ; but by a promise of acquittal immediately after their death, and of a reign with Christ in Paradise during the intermediate state. Other men receive no such blessed refreshment. They receive no sentence of acquittal. They remain in that state of death in which bodily death overtook them. They receive no sentence until the end, and when that end comes they receive the sentence of condemnation.

But the souls of the righteous, the spirits of all those who here rise again with Christ, who experience the Power of His Resurrection in their hearts, these blessed souls are borne in the hour of death to the Paradise of God. And this is the First Resurrection : " blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." It is said of these saints that they shall reign a thousand years with Christ in Paradise, simply because that period of time has just been mentioned with reference to another more prominent and important subject of the vision, the binding and subsequent loosing of Satan.

Now what does the prophecy explain this binding and loosing of Satan to mean ?

Clearly not the final destruction of Satan, nor the

complete annihilation of his power over man. This comes afterwards, after the chain has been for "a little season" taken from him again. His destruction is mentioned in the 10th verse: "the devil . . . was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," where all the enemies of God have been before thrown in the visions of the Apocalypse, "where the beast and the false prophet were thrown."

No. It does not mean the destruction of Satan, but simply his coercion for a stated time and a stated purpose. He is held back by a chain in the Abyss in order that he may not be able to "deceive the nations;" that is to say, prevent them from believing the doctrines of the Gospel. So, when this chain is taken from him, it is with this express purpose that he is released, namely, that he may deceive all nations and make them apostatise and fight against God and His Church.

It is evident, from his subsequent release, that this binding of Satan is not intended to denote a complete destruction of his power. And Scripture fully justifies a qualified interpretation of its language. Similar expressions are elsewhere used which must be thus understood, or be contradicted by matters of daily experience. Thus this same Apostle asserts, in his First Epistle, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."[1] "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."[2] No reasonable person would imagine the Apostle to mean by these words that the righteous are ever in this life wholly free from sin, or that the Devil has no power to tempt and molest them. So the binding of Satan must be understood to signify a very great, though not entire, diminution of his power over the nations of the earth.

[1] 1 John iii. 9. [2] 1 John v. 18.

Moreover, St. Peter speaks of Satan as bound even from the period of his first transgression, which must have occurred before the Creation, or, at the least, before the Fall of Man. He speaks of him as bound from that time even up to the Day of Judgment, although we have far too many reasons for knowing that this binding did not imply a total loss of power to tempt, deceive, and injure man. Thus we read, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment."[1] St. Jude writes to the same effect: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."[2]

The binding, then, of the Devil clearly relates to this one point only, the diminution of his power to keep the world in unbelief.[3] It does not relate generally in this vision to his power over man's soul; but specially to his influence amongst the Gentiles to keep them in a state of unbelief.

Now it is quite clear that Satan used every effort, during the first three or four centuries, to put down Christianity by force and open persecution. But he did not succeed. Christianity was at last established as the religion of the World's Ruler. And this great event, that is to say, the conversion of Constantine, Hammond, in his commentary on the passage, considers to have been the binding of Satan. The interpretation of Hengstenberg, therefore, is not new in principle, but only in his application of the principle. Both commentators consider the binding of Satan to denote the

[1] 2 Peter ii. 4. [2] Jude 6.

[3] "Quod autem ait ligatum atque inclusum illum, ut non seducat gentes: gentes Ecclesiam significant, ex iis ipsa constat, quas seductas ante tenebat."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

political establishment of Christianity; but Hengstenberg, in accordance with the interpretations suggested in this volume, does not consider that Christianity was thoroughly established until the age of Charlemagne.

This state of things continued for precisely a thousand years. And then Christianity began rapidly to lose its political hold upon the world. There is every reason to fear that it will go on losing more and more of its political influence, until the Great Apostasy of the nations has been accomplished.

We are not to expect all this change in one or two generations of men. Satan was not bound all at once. His coercion was gradual from the very beginning. The Church grew on silently, taking root downwards and shooting upwards, until it became a great tree and filled the whole land. And as the Church grew Satan's power decreased; not his power over individual men's hearts, but his power to deceive the Gentiles and to keep them in a state of Paganism.

As the binding was historically gradual, so, we have reason to believe, will the loosing be. A tree which has grown gradually decays gradually also. And so it is with the Church's influence in the world. One generation appears to make very little difference; but it does its work in silence, and passes by, leaving that work to be completed by its successors.

Although, however, this is generally true, there are nevertheless certain marked and prominent epochs in all great political changes. There are generations in which things seem to come to a head. There are climacterics in the history of nations, as well as in the constitutions of men.

And with reference to the political influence of Christianity, the age of Charlemagne may be regarded as one climax, and that of the French Revolution as another. The

interval between these two great epochs was exactly a thousand years.

Now, before proceeding further, it may be well to point out how exactly this view of the Millennium corresponds with the interpretation already suggested of the other visions of the Apocalypse.

Let us observe this, first, with reference to the binding of Satan; secondly, with reference to the bliss of the saints during that period; and, thirdly, with reference to his release and its consequences.

1. An Angel comes down from heaven with the Key of the Abyss, and a great chain. He shuts up Satan in the Abyss, sets a seal upon its entrance, and declares that he shall remain imprisoned a thousand years, and then shall be released for a short time. He is thus bound to prevent him from deceiving the nations. This is the scenery and action of the Allegory. Its obvious meaning expressed in plain language is this, that Christ, by His Providential arrangements, would prevent Satan, for a thousand years, from keeping the nations in ignorance of the doctrines of the Gospel, or in a state of unbelief. This work was not accomplished for many centuries after the Death of Christ. Indeed, it was not fully and finally accomplished until the complete conversion of those tribes which destroyed Rome, and until the establishment of the Great Hierarchy of the West in the age of Charlemagne.

We ought to regard the political establishment of Christianity, and its connection with the ruling powers of the world, in two opposite points of view: on the one hand, as a great good; and, on the other, as accompanied with much evil. There is nothing necessarily evil in the connection of Church and State. On the contrary, it is a great advantage to any religion to be established, to be supported by wise and religious rulers. And, notwithstanding the

immense evils which have accompanied the establishment of Christianity in Christendom, none perhaps will deny its many and great advantages. The advantages would have been infinitely greater, and more numerous, had it not been for the sins of kings and people, priests and laity. The political establishment of Christianity has been given to the world by Providence as a blessing ; and it has been, on the whole, more favourable to the increase of the Church than the continued and open hostility of the world would have been. But, like so many other Providential arrangements intended for man's good, this establishment of Christianity has been in many instances, through human wickedness, a source of evil.

Because the establishment of the Church has really had these two contrary effects, it is regarded in two very opposite aspects in the Apocalypse. In some visions its abuses are shown as great evils ; and, in others, its advantages are exhibited as blessings. So here the Establishment of Christianity, its adoption to be the religion of the most powerful nations, is regarded as a blessing, and shown to be the result of certain Providential restraints put upon Satan, allegorised by his being bound for a thousand years in the Abyss, and so prevented from deceiving the nations.

The establishment of Christianity in the world, regarded as a blessing, has been before allegorised under the significant figure of the Woman's escape into the wilderness, into a place which Providence had of old prepared for her, that men should nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty years.

The same Establishment, regarded with a view to its gross abuses by Civil and Ecclesiastical Rulers, and the baneful influences of the Papal City, is elsewhere allegorised in most minute detail, and by the use of symbols which are emblematic, as we have seen, of every Civil and

Ecclesiastical element of modern Christendom. The Holy City, or Christian Church, is trodden underfoot by the nations ; and Christ's true Witnesses bear a sorrowful testimony in it for the period of a thousand two hundred and sixty years. The Beast, or ruling World-power in Christendom, continues his warfare against the faithful Witnesses for the same period of a thousand two hundred and sixty years.

The vision of the binding of Satan illustrates this symbolism of the warfare of the Beast. We learn from it that for a thousand years the Devil is prevented from appearing as an open enemy. During this time, then, he gives "his throne, and power, and great authority" to the Beast, or Temporal Ruler of Christendom. At the end of the thousand years, Satan, released from this state of coercion, begins to shake the foundations of Christianity. And he will probably accomplish the Great Apostasy by the end of the 1260 years.

As, then, the Allegory represents this period of the Church's Establishment under figures of various kinds, so the gradual coercion of Satan, which ended in this establishment, has been no less clearly symbolised.

The flight of the Woman or Church into her appointed place of Establishment in the wilderness does not take place all at once. First of all, there is the long and bloody war of the early martyrs, represented under the Allegory of the battle of Michael and his Angels against the Serpent and his Angels.

The Blood of Christ utterly destroys the Devil's power over man's heavenly state ; but it only exasperates him against all men who still remain in the world. And the success of the early martyrs continues to diminish the power of Satan to hold the nations in unbelief, so that he perceives that his time is short, and that he will soon be obliged to cease from persecuting the Church openly,

because God has prepared a place of Establishment for Her in the wilderness of this world, where she will be comparatively out of the reach of his open malice. But he fights against the martyrs for every inch of ground. And even when the Roman Empire becomes the friend of Christianity, when the Woman is taken up upon the Two Wings of the Great Eagle, he feels that all is not yet lost, that the chain and seal have not yet been put upon his open hostilities. He then, as we have seen, tries to sweep away the Church, together with the Empire, by a Deluge of Barbarians; but the Woman escapes this Deluge, and so arrives at last at her appointed place. After this he is obliged to desist from persecuting the Woman, and continues his warfare only with the faithful remnant of her seed. And these he cannot attack openly, and in his proper character of adversary; he is obliged to assume the outward appearance of Christianity; he gives his Power and Authority to another, to the Beast or World-power, now in name and profession converted to Christianity.

Thus the earlier visions of the Apocalypse represent the binding of Satan, which prevents him from keeping the nations in unbelief, as gradually brought about, and as incomplete until he is obliged to lay aside the character of an open enemy and to act as a secret foe in the very bosom of the Church herself.

During the time that Satan is bound, his work is carried on by the Christian Powers themselves: by the Tenfold Family of Western Nations, by the Dynasty of the Holy Roman Emperors, and by the Pope.

2. But what of the Saints during this period of Satan's imprisonment, during the ages of the Church's political power, during this thousand years? What is said of them in this 20th chapter What is said of them of the same kind in the earlier visions of the Apocalypse?

That everyone who avoids the snares of Satan, who refuses to worship the world, or to become the slave of the world, shall upon his faithful death be carried into the Paradise of God.

The vision of this 20th chapter relates chiefly to the binding and loosing of Satan; to that period of time during which Christianity is dominant; is the openly Established Religion of the most influential nations of the earth. The chapter consists of fifteen verses, and only three of them relate to the saints. What saints are they? They are the Witnesses of Jesus, and those who refuse, during the time that Christianity is dominant, to worship those powers which, though Christian in name, are, as we have already seen in many other Allegories of this book, opposed to the more faithful members of the Church, to those who not only believe but act up to the doctrines of Jesus Christ. They refuse to worship the Beast and his Image, nor will they consent to be marked as his slaves. From this we learn at what time they live: at the time when the Beast and his Image are in power; that is to say, in the ages subsequent to that of Charlemagne. Now what happens to these saints? They receive the Judgment of Salvation when they die, and they ascend into Paradise to live and reign with Christ in the intermediate state. There is not a single word said about their reigning on the earth.[1] Christ is not upon the earth until He comes the second time to judge the world. And, according to this vision, the Second Advent, the accompanying resurrection of the bodies of all the dead, and the Last Great Judgment, take place not before but after the thousand years during which Satan is

[1] "Ergo audiendi non sunt qui mille annorum regnum terrenum esse sentiunt. Nam regnum Christi nunc est sempiternum in Sanctis, cum fuerit gloria post resurrectionem manifesta sanctorum."—Victorinus, *in loc.*

bound. The vision gives the events in the following order: (1) Satan is bound for a thousand years. (2) Satan is released for a short time. (3) The dead rise from their graves, and the good and bad are judged according to their works.

There are no words in this chapter which justify the notion that the dead saints will reign on this earth, with Christ also on this earth, before the Last Great Judgment, which immediately follows the Resurrection. It is a notion without a single word of support from other passages of Scripture, and certainly not supported by the words of this vision. The reign of the saints seems to mean their blissful reign with Christ in the intermediate state. Though Satan is bound and unable to deceive the nations so as to keep them in unbelief, the true servants of God are always persecuted in this world, whether it be a Christian world or a heathen world; but when they die they are carried by angels into the presence of Christ, their souls rise to the Mediatorial Throne of Jesus. There they immediately receive the Judgment of Salvation, and enter into a state of perfect rest and partial glory. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

How consistent, then, is the Allegory, described in this chapter, with every other Allegory which we have before examined! Here we have again the saints in the intermediate state, to whom White Robes were given in the vision of the Fifth Seal, and who were there told to "rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." As the souls spoken of in the Fifth Seal wait for the ranks of the martyrs to be filled up during the last Great Apostasy: so the saints of the 20th chapter wait in glory until the Devil is released to bring about the same event. How consistent is the one vision with the other!

Again, with reference to the same Great Apostasy, the

number of the saints is made up and a seal is set upon them in the vision of the 7th chapter.

So, again, before the Vials of Wrath are poured out upon the Kingdom of the Beast, we are assured that the saints will in every age gain the victory over him. For at the beginning of the 15th chapter those who had "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name," sing praises to God for their victory.

These very same saints, then, are again mentioned in the 20th chapter. Again, something is said which naturally raises the question, But what of the saints all this time? We are told that Satan is bound for a thousand years, during which time he is unable to keep the nations from accepting the Gospel. Oh! we exclaim, what a happy time for the true servants of God! How delightful a place must the world be for them now! But no; the prophecy warns us to entertain no such notion. The world will still be the enemy of the true saint, even the believing, the enlightened, the Christian world. He will still be beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and because he will not worship the new form of the Beast, and his Image, nor receive his mark upon his forehead or on his hand.

But what of that? His Saviour has told him to expect such things up to the very end; that the acceptance of the Gospel will not alter the character of the world; that human society will go on just as usual until He comes again to judge the world; that there will always be wars and rumours of wars, and false Christs and prophets, and lying miracles; and even more of these things as the end approaches. Therefore the true saint has no dreams of an earthly Paradise before the Day of Judgment. But what other period of rest and comfort has he then before him? He looks for that Paradise of which the dying Saviour spoke

to the dying malefactor; that bosom of Abraham whither the poor and afflicted are borne in the hour of dissolution by holy and loving Angels. He believes in an intermediate state of rest and partial glory. He knows that, during the thousand years specially mentioned with reference to an historical fact in the Church's history, as well as during every other age of the world, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, because they rest from their labours; that all who are beheaded for Christ's sake shall be taken up to His throne and shall reign with Him, until He comes again to raise the dead and judge the world.

The period of a thousand years is mentioned first with reference to the imprisonment of Satan, because this partial coercion of his power lasts about that time. Because during all that time the saints who die in the Lord pass to the intermediate state of rest and partial glory, they are said also to reign with Christ during the same period. It cannot be true, however, that all the saints, or each individual saint, will enjoy the intermediate state of rest for precisely the same number of years. Some will be reigning during the whole thousand years, and every year during that period the number will go on increasing as the saints pass by death from the militant Church to the Church triumphant. Satan is imprisoned during all the thousand years, and some of the saints are reigning during all the thousand years. And at any one point of time during the thousand years every saint who has as yet lived on earth and then passed by death into Paradise is among those who are reigning. Thus the declaration of the prophecy is fulfilled with regard to the saints by the fact that there is a Kingdom of Saints, during all the time that Satan is in prison, reigning in the intermediate state with Christ; neither is that declaration rendered false by the fact that this Kingdom of Saints is a numerically increasing kingdom up to the very hour when

God shall have accomplished the number of His elect and shall introduce them at the general resurrection to the Eternal Kingdom of perfect bliss and glory.

Neither are we to suppose that no Kingdom of disembodied saints existed in the intermediate state before the beginning of this period of a thousand years. This vision evidently fits into the Allegory of the Apocalypse just at that point of time in the course of the Drama when the Image of the Beast was set up; that is to say, the age of Charlemagne. Satan was not bound till that time, although the process of binding had been going on during many centuries; Christianity was not thoroughly established, till that time, as the religion of the world, although it had been gradually driving Paganism out of all its strongholds.

The time, therefore, when Christianity was finally established is the evident starting-point of this particular vision; and this amazing victory of the truth naturally raises the question, What of the saints? How will it fare with them?

Now this is a question raised by a statement of a great victory gained over Satan. In previous visions the question has generally been raised by the mention of fearful judgments. How natural, then, how suitable, how consistent is the answer!

Victory, too, is attributed to the saints. A reign of glory is held out to them. But the prophecy does not deceive them by the promise of any earthly paradise. It does not so disarm them. It does not so directly contradict the words of Christ, Who predicts wars and rumours of wars, and false prophets, and lying miracles, and persecutions, and trials of faith even up to the hour of His Appearing. It does not so contradict the prophecy of St. Paul, who speaks of Satanic working, and lying miracles, and false teachers, beginning from the first and continuing up to the time of the Great Apostasy, and the disclosure of the Man

of Sin immediately before the Second Glorious Advent of Christ. No. This prophecy does not so give the lie to every other prophecy of Scripture and every other prophecy of this book.

It holds out to the saints a glorious Kingdom indeed, but a Kingdom not of this world nor in it; a Kingdom to come, only after a faithful death; a Kingdom of their disembodied souls in the intermediate state with the Risen Christ; a Kingdom for all "the souls of them that (should be) beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which (should not) worship the beast, neither his image, neither (should receive) his mark in their foreheads or in their hands."

3. But the third point in which this vision corresponds with other prophecies, in the Apocalypse and elsewhere, is in the prediction of the Great Apostasy consequent upon the release of Satan from the Abyss. The fact that this Apostasy is so precisely mentioned as following the Millennium, and preceding the Final Judgment of the risen bodies of men, is not only one of the greatest difficulties in the theory of a literal Millennium, but is also another point in which the consistency of this vision with the rest of the Apocalypse is very apparent. It shows us again, under different figures, the great events which the world is now awaiting, and which will be followed, we may surely hope and believe, by the Advent of Christ and the end of all sin and sorrow; the last Great Apostasy, the last great warfare against religion, during which the Papal Hierarchy will be destroyed.

The Devil is released from the Abyss. He again deceives all the nations of the earth. He brings the armies of Gog and Magog against the Church. These armies are destroyed by fire from heaven. And the Devil himself is then sent into his eternal abode of woe.

Then God appears in judgment. The earth and heaven are destroyed. The dead arise. "The books are opened; and another book is opened, which is the book of life . . . . and whosoever is not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire."

Then what follows? A glorious description of the New Heaven and the New Earth, of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the City and Kingdom of those who are made partakers of eternal glory.

The reader will not fail to observe how consistent this interpretation is with those already suggested.

Satan is released from the Abyss. No sooner is he free than he commences the work of deception. It is not likely that he will complete it for some time. But there is very little doubt that he began that fearful work at the French Revolution. Now the reader will remember how the Abyss was opened in the vision of the Fifth Trumpet; and how that symbolic act was explained to mean the withdrawal of those Providential restraints which had so long kept from open violence the worldly instruments of Satan. From arguments deduced from independent sources, we were led to the conclusion that the opening of the Abyss in the vision of the Fifth Trumpet began to take effect at the beginning of the French Revolution. This was the time when Christianity experienced the first serious shock as the received religion of the European nations. There is reason to believe that this time was the beginning of the loosing of Satan; that his work, which will some day issue in the Great Apostasy, was commenced then. Reckoning back a thousand years from that time, we come to the age of Charlemagne.

The universality of the Last Great Apostasy is implied by the expressions, "to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather

them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."[1] And these expressions connect the prophecy with the visions of the Sixth Seal, the Sixth Trumpet, the Sixth Vial, and the prophecies of Ezekiel.

The vision of "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth"[2] teaches us not only that the judgment of the Sixth Seal shall not take effect until the servants of God have been sealed, but also that that judgment shall be universal, affecting the whole world. "The four corners of the earth" must mean the same as "the four quarters of the earth."

On the sounding of the Sixth Trumpet we have again the loosing of four destroying Angels, and the mention of innumerable armies, called forth to battle.

On the pouring out of the Sixth Vial, the way of the destroyers of Babylon is prepared, and the spirits of devils "go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty."[3]

And in the later prophecies of Ezekiel, Gog and Magog, whatever nations they may represent in the age of that ancient prophet, are evidently the enemies of God and His people, and are destroyed by Him, when His people are delivered from Babylon and brought back again to Jerusalem to rebuild their City and Temple.

Magog was one of the sons of Japheth, the forefather of the European nations, and may therefore be the symbol for the nations of Europe. But it is more probable that the name is here used to connect the vision with the prophecy of Ezekiel, especially when we observe that both in Ezekiel and the Apocalypse the vision of the rebuilding of Jerusalem immediately follows the destruction of Gog and Magog.

[1] Rev. xx. 8. [2] Rev. vii. 1. [3] Rev. xvi. 14.

We cannot say what nation or nations will produce the "Man of Sin" and head the Last Great Apostasy. All we are concerned to know is the general principle embodied in the figurative language of unfulfilled prophecy. If we know the general principle of evil which awaits its development, we shall know how to avoid it, whether we expect this nation or that to take the lead in the closing scenes of the world's history.

The general principle is this, that in spite of all our boasted light and civilisation; in spite of the wide-spread and long-standing rule of Christianity in the world; the Devil will have power to bring about the most fearful Apostasy from God that the world has ever yet seen; to raise up kings and people against the faithful witnesses of the truth; to destroy even that corrupt Hierarchy of which Rome is the centre; and, in the figurative language of this prophecy, "to compass the camp of the saints about,"[1] to imperil the very existence of Christ's Religion upon the earth.

The triumph of evil, however, will be short-lived. The Coming of Christ Himself to judgment will shorten these days. For "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."[2] As St. Paul declares, the Lord shall destroy the "Man of Sin" by the Spirit of His Mouth and the brightness of His Coming. As St. Peter says, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burned up." "But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."[3]

Here then is the end of all sin and sorrow. The last enemy of God is fully and finally imprisoned, never to tempt or hurt mankind again. "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where

[1] Rev. xx. 9. [2] Rev. xx. 9. [3] 2 Peter iii. 13.

the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."[1] This does not mean that the Beast and False Prophet were cast into hell before the Devil, who deceived them, was destroyed. There is no order of time denoted here, except so far as the order of the visions themselves is concerned. St. John means only to refer the reader to his previous vision, and to connect this one with it. He had seen a vision just before, at the close of which "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . . and these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."[2] Then he sees the vision of the 20th chapter, at the close of which "the devil . . . . is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone." And then, referring to what he had seen before, and connecting this event with it, he adds, "where I also saw the Beast and False Prophet thrown."

Then comes the end, which needs no interpretation, and could not be described in language more sublime than that of the Seer himself. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."[3]

[1] Rev. xx. 10. [2] Rev. xix. 20. [3] Rev. xx. 11–15.

CHAPTER XVI

GOG AND MAGOG. NEW JERUSALEM

In the 20th chapter of the Apocalypse, the last enemies of the Church are destroyed by the sudden Advent of Christ; the dead are raised from their graves; the Last Judgment takes place; and thus the good are finally separated from the evil. Then follows a description of heaven, the eternal abode of the righteous, under the images of a new heaven, and a new earth, and a splendid City called the New Jerusalem.

These descriptions may be compared with the prophecies of Ezekiel, for they closely resemble them. What, then, are the principal subjects of his prophecies?

In common with the majority of the Hebrew prophets, he speaks chiefly of the sins of his people; of their captivity in Babylon; and of their final and glorious restoration to their own land. Up to the 24th chapter, he describes, under a variety of images, the judgments hanging over Judæa; and the impending destruction by the Chaldæan armies of the Temple and City of Jerusalem. Then he directs his prophecies against those nations who had triumphed over the fall of Judah; and he shows how they, too, in their turn, would be crushed by that "King of kings," the mighty ruler of Babylon. After this, he encourages the Jews, exhorting them to repentance, and promising them a return to their own land. But, strange to

say, although he assures the Jews of their approaching deliverance, he seems to omit to mention the destruction of their great enemy, the King of Babylon.

How he differs in this respect from Isaiah and Jeremiah ! How plain, how awful, are their denunciations of woe against Babylon and its wicked king !

There is, however, an obvious cause for this apparent omission. Isaiah lived and died before the commencement of the Captivity. Jeremiah prophesied, indeed, during the Captivity, but he was not himself carried to Babylon. How natural it is, then, that Ezekiel, whose office it was to teach and comfort the Jews, and not to preach repentance to the Babylonians, should either omit altogether, or mention only in an enigmatical manner, sufficiently intelligible to the Jews but incomprehensible to their enemies, the overthrow of that great king in whose power he was. Now this is exactly what seems to have been the case. Isaiah and Jeremiah speak plainly of the destruction of Babylon by the Persians. Ezekiel and Daniel, living as they did in Babylonia, speak only in an allegorical and mysterious manner of that great event which led to the deliverance of the Lord's people.

There is reason to believe, therefore, that Ezekiel's mysterious vision of Gog and Magog, whatever further and more typical meaning it may have, supplies this omission, and relates, in its first and most natural sense, to the destruction of the King of Babylon and his armies, an event spoken of in plainer language by Isaiah and Jeremiah, and therefore not likely to be absent from the thoughts of those spiritually-minded Jews whom it more immediately concerned to understand the prophecy.

Moreover, it is evident from the prophecies themselves that Gog means the King of Babylon. For he is called the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and of several

other kingdoms, whom the prophet had before mentioned as the nations subdued by that great conqueror.

Meshech and Tubal were evidently nations residing at no great distance from Tyre, and connected with it. The prophet says of Tyre, "Tubal and Meshech, they were thy merchants." [1] And they no less evidently fell, together with Tyre and other nations, under the universal power of Babylon. Speaking of Egypt as fallen beneath the "sword of the King of Babylon," he mentions other nations as being in the same subject state: "There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude." [2]

Again Gog is represented as a mighty prince, coming with vast armies from the north. "And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts; thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army." [3] Precisely the same description had before been given of the King of Babylon. "Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, a King of kings, from the north." [4]

It is not easy to conjecture what reasons led Ezekiel to adopt the names Gog and Magog rather than any other for the purpose of concealing the sense of his prophecy from the Chaldæan enemies of Israel. Neither can we tell, at this distance of time and in the absence of any historical records, whether these were real or fictitious names. But it is somewhat remarkable that Meshech, Tubal, Gomer and Togarmah, as well as Magog, are mentioned in Genesis as the sons of Japheth, the great forefather of the tribes which peopled Europe. It may have been that these names Gog and Magog were selected by the Spirit which suggested

[1] Ezek. xxvii. 13. [2] Ezek. xxxii. 26. [3] Ezek. xxxviii. 15.
[4] Ezek. xxvi. 7.

Here the prophet mentions the King of Babylon by name without fear, because he is speaking of his conquests and not of his defeats.

Ezekiel's vision, because it was foreseen that, in the latter days, the last great enemies of the Church would not be the Asiatic descendants of Shem, or the African descendants of Ham, but the European children of the eldest son of Noah.

Not only are these three great races of mankind widely different one from another in features and character, they have also each held supreme power in their turn, beginning with the children of the youngest, and ending with those of the eldest son of the patriarch. Ham's turn came first, and his sons possessed the great Egyptian Empire. Then succeeded the dominion of Shem, which reached its culminating point in the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. And last of all came Japheth, when his sons, the Greeks, Romans, and subsequent European kingdoms, became the leading nations of the world.

There is scarcely a more remarkable prophecy in the Bible than that of Noah respecting his children. First of all we have the degraded and servile condition of the African tribes pointed out in the words, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."[1] Canaan was the son of Ham, and he is here specially mentioned as being that son of Ham who chiefly opposed the people of God. But it was the sin of Ham himself which was the immediate cause of this curse, and the curse has indeed fallen upon all his children.

Africa, the land of Ham, has indeed fallen and become degraded from a very early period of the world's history. And its transient eras of splendour, since that time, have been due rather to the immigrations of foreigners than to the energy of any genuine descendants of the third son of Noah.

Now it was not strange that Moses should record the

[1] Gen. ix. 25.

degradation of Ham's children, since they were the enemies of his people. But we should expect him, if he spoke only as a man and not under the influence of the Spirit of Truth, to give Shem the pre-eminence, and not to represent Japheth's dominion as about to be in the end more extensive than that of his three brethren. Yet the words of Noah predicted this, and therefore Moses faithfully records them. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."[1] Here is a promise to the Semitic tribes of the Divine Blessing. But the more extensive and lasting dominion is given to the elder brother in the remarkable words, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."[2]

This is indeed one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible. Who would have thought it possible, even in the days of Ezekiel, that the glory of Shem would soon fade before the rising splendour of Japheth? That the tribes of Europe were soon about to exhibit an energy of conquest which should ultimately render them masters of the world? Yet so it has been. Since the days of the Greeks and Romans, the early leaders of the great family of Japheth,[3] God has continued to enlarge his borders, and to give him both the privileges and the possessions of Shem. The dominion of Japheth commenced with the Greeks, or perhaps the Persians, was consolidated by the Romans, and was transmitted by them to the nations of mediæval and modern Europe.

Now it seems most probable that this is alluded to in the prophetic names, Gog and Magog, if not in Ezekiel, at any rate in the Apocalyptic Vision.

The European nations are descended from Japheth;

[1] Gen. ix. 26. [2] Gen. ix. 27.

[3] "Audax Iapeti genus."—Hor. *Carm.* i. 3, 27.

Magog, Meshech, and Tubal were sons of Japheth; and the visions of the Apocalypse lead us to expect a great Apostasy of those European nations who once supported the Christian Church. Considering these three facts, it seems highly probable that the names Gog and Magog are simply emblematic in the Apocalypse of the European nations, the descendants of Japheth. Whether the prescient spirit in Ezekiel looked forward to the same historical agents of the last persecution of the Church is another and a less material question; because it is clear that his prophecy relates primarily to the King of Babylon, and the destruction of that mighty one, before the restoration of the Jews to their own land and the rebuilding of their City and Temple.

But, however this may be, it is very certain that, as the destruction of Babylon in the earlier Apocalyptic visions precedes the final judgment and the glory of the risen saints, so in these last chapters, the imagery of which is very different, the destruction of Ezekiel's Gog and Magog, the last enemies of the people of God, precedes the vision of the New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem of the saints.

We may, then, fairly conclude that the names Gog and Magog are used in the Apocalypse for this double purpose. First, to connect the prophecy with the vision of Ezekiel; to predict the destruction of the last persecutors of the Church under names already adopted by Ezekiel and applied to a similar purpose; and then, secondly, to connect the prophecy with that of Noah, by attributing supreme power in the latter days to the descendants of Japheth.

Some have imagined an allusion to Russia in Ezekiel's vision. "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog,

the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." [1] We may compare this with Daniel's prophecy of "the time of the end" in which he thus writes of a Great King of the North : "He shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. He shall enter into the glorious land." [2]

But after all, so far as the understanding of the general meaning of this prophecy is concerned, it is of very little consequence to know what nations are specially referred to in the names of Gog and Magog ; for the ascendency of the children of Japheth is an historical fact ; The World-power is in their hands, and is certainly, so far as we can judge, likely to remain so. And all that we are really concerned to know of their future history is this : that when the Devil has been able to bring about again the deception and predicted Apostasy of the Ruling Powers of the world, when he has brought things to the worst and the saints are in the greatest peril, then Christ Himself will appear for the deliverance of His people, then the dead will rise, the judgment will take place, and the righteous will enter into the City of their Eternal Glory.

The restoration of the Jews from Babylon, the rebuilding of their City and Temple, the renovation of their happy land, was indeed a great event in their national history, a repetition of the mercy of the Exodus.

It was, however, but a faint shadow of the glories which shall hereafter be revealed in the deliverance of the saints in the latter days, and their entrance with the

[1] Ezek. xxxviii. 1-4. *R. V.* [2] Dan. xi. 40-45.

righteous of all generations into the New Jerusalem of Eternal Bliss.

It is in this great event that all the promises of God will be most completely, and we know not yet how literally, fulfilled. Every passage of Scripture which seems to refer to a final restoration of the Jews to their own land, and which does not seem to have been adequately fulfilled, either in the return from Babylon, or the Establishment of the Christian Church, will have its complete fulfilment in the Glorious Heavenly Jerusalem.

The most sublime language, the most lofty and glowing descriptions of the prophets can but faintly picture to our imaginations the splendours of that Eternal Kingdom. St. John describes it as a New Heaven and a New Earth, and a City far more glorious than human eyes have ever yet beheld. And, we may be sure, there will be not only spiritual but also material glories in Heaven, if it be an undoubted truth that our bodies will rise from the grave on the last day of this world of sin and sorrow.

Some seem to think it necessary, for the fulfilment of the prophecies, that the Jews should be restored to the literal Jerusalem, and that Christ should reign with His saints in this world before the Judgment. They seem to forget that the whole human race will rise from their graves on the last day, and that that day will find very many still alive and going on with their usual occupations in the world. Surely this will be the time for the full accomplishment of the promises of God. This will be the time for the pardon and acceptance of the Jew, as well as the Gentile, who has lived and died in unbelief through ignorance. Then shall all Israel be saved who are really of Israel.

Such, then, is the interpretation of the last vision of

the Apocalypse. It is a vision of Heaven, the Final and Eternal Home of all who are saved out of the races of fallen humanity. "They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." [1]

We care not where our final home shall be, whether on this earth renewed by the fires of judgment, or on some other distant planet.[2] It is enough for us to know that we shall be with God and with Christ. And this we do know; for St. John "heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." [3]

Neither do we care to analyse over-nicely the ingredients of our cup of bliss. We know that it will be an overflowing cup, and that every bitter herb shall be taken out of it. For "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." [4]

We know that there is not a yearning desire of the heart that shall not be more than satisfied; for it is written, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." [5]

We had better prepare ourselves for that bliss than over-curiously speculate upon it. For there is no promise or repentance after the voice of the Last Trumpet has called us from the grave. Then shall it be said, "The time is at

[1] Rev. xxi. 26, 27.

[2] "Figura hujus mundi supernorum ignium conflagratione præteribit, ut cælo et terra in melius commutatis, incorruptioni et immortalitati sanctorum corporum congrua utriusque commutationis qualitas conveniat."—Bede, *in loc.*

[3] Rev. xxi. 3. [4] Rev. xxi. 4. [5] Rev. xxii. 17.

hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."[1]

We have come to the end of the Apocalyptic visions ; those only of the Seven Epistles to the Churches of Asia having been omitted.

It seems most probable that these Epistles, though addressed nominally to particular Churches, are intended for the warning, instruction, and consolation of the Universal Church in all ages. Why, otherwise, should these Seven Churches have been mentioned rather than any others? There were a great many more than seven Churches in those days ; why should Epistles of such a mysterious and general character have been sent to Seven only?

An examination of the Epistles themselves will tend to confirm this opinion.

There are allusions throughout by anticipation to many things subsequently spoken of in visions which manifestly relate to the whole Church of Christ. The tree of life ; deliverance from the second death ; the white garments of saints ; the city of God ; and elevation to the throne of Christ, are amongst the rewards promised to those who are faithful, unmoved alike by the persecutions of enemies and the evil example of friends. And, indeed, the inestimable importance of individual salvation is the chief point insisted upon in these Epistles as well as in the other visions of the Apocalypse. The Revelation exhibits throughout in a strong light this primary object of the Gospel, the salvation of the individual Christian's soul, rather than the building up of any glorious Ecclesiastical Hierarchy on the earth. It supports the patience and faith of the saints in the midst of violent per-

[1] Rev. xxii. 10–12.

secutions or wide-spreading corruptions ; and it holds out to them the prospect of painful but victorious combats with evil in this world, followed by the rest of the intermediate state after death, and the Glorious and Eternal Kingdom of Christ, in the new Heaven and the new Earth, after the general resurrection of the dead.

Whether these Seven Epistles relate to seven successive stages in the history of the Universal Church or not, is a question which it is not of much consequence to determine ; the chief objects of the Epistles being evidently warning and consolation rather than the prediction of coming events.

If, like Ephesus, the Church, in any age or country, falls away from its first love, no matter what may have been its good works and zeal for the truth in former days, repentance alone and a return to its first works will avert the extinction of its light in the spiritual Temple of God. But though the light of that Church may be extinguished, faithful individuals in it shall never perish ; for "to him that overcometh," says He who holds the Seven Stars and walks amongst the Candlesticks, "I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." [1]

It may or may not be the case that, beyond this general teaching, the Epistle implies that the Church in St. John's age was just beginning to fall away from the fervour of its first zeal, and that the persecutions spoken of in the next Epistle were the judgments which God sent for its chastisement and purification.

How consistent with this is the Epistle immediately following, addressed to the Church of Smyrna ! Its general object is consolation to a poor and persecuted Church. But beyond this it may also point more particularly to the ages of fierce Roman persecution, and perhaps to the Ten

[1] Rev. ii. 7.

Great Persecutions of the first three centuries, symbolised by the ten days' tribulation of the Church of Smyrna.[1] Everything in this Epistle is consistent with its object of consoling under tribulation. Christ reminds the suffering saints of His own passion and resurrection : "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive."[2] There is not one word of blame from the beginning to the end of the message, and it terminates with the promise to the faithful martyr of a crown of life and of deliverance from the second death.

There are some very remarkable points in the Epistle to the Church of Pergamos corroborative of the suggestion that it may refer to a definite period in the history of the Church, or rather that it contains warnings against certain peculiar forms of evil in the Church, which were developed immediately after the ages of persecution and have continued to exist amongst Christians ever since.

The emphatic mention twice in the course of the Epistle of the sharp, two-edged sword of Christ, the sword of the Lord's mouth, seems to carry our thoughts to the vision of the Rider on the Red Horse, explained in the foregoing pages of this book to relate to the Christian ministry persecuting with the Sword of temporal dominion. Consistent with this, too, is the mention of Satan's throne. The Angel of Pergamos dwells where Satan's throne is, and this expression has been before explained io mean the throne of worldly power. There are also in this Epistle traces of the first breaking down of the outworks of a firm and uncompromising profession of the Gospel, which was the natural and lamentable result of an alliance with the rulers of this world. There is the beginning of that spiritual fornication

[1] "Quidam decem gentium persecutiones a Nerone Cæsare usque ad Diocletianum significatas intelligunt."—Bede xii. 349.

[2] Rev. ii. 8.

with the kings of the earth, which became so fearfully corrupting in subsequent ages. Pergamos, although on the whole she maintains the doctrines of truth, has within her many seeds of evil, especially those of covetousness and the maxims of worldly expediency : "them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication." [1] These are, in plainer words, those who are covetous like Balaam, and those who, like him, use every expedient, lawful or unlawful, to accomplish their sordid and worldly ends. There is nothing like this in the Epistles to Ephesus and Smyrna ; and the downward tendency of this and the two following Churches accords with the actual history of the Church, and renders it still more probable that these Epistles are intended to predict the gradual falling away of Christians.

There is some praise, however, for every Church except Sardis and Laodicea ; for in every Church and in every age of the Church God has His faithful witnesses to keep alive the light of truth in the world. And salvation is not denied to individuals even in the dead Church of Sardis, or in the proud and lukewarm Laodicea.

So there is some praise for Pergamos, the praise of holding fast the name of Christ in the last persecution, and not denying His Name ; and to the faithful individual is promised "the hidden manna" and "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." [2]

In the Epistle to Thyatira the mention of Jezebel, the false prophetess, seems to point to that age of the Church when the Harlot, already explained to mean the Roman City, began to practise her lying miracles and to commit

[1] Rev. ii. 14. [2] Rev. ii. 17.

fornication more and more with the kings of the whole earth.

It is indeed much less difficult to imagine that such an allusion to Rome is intended, than to think that there existed in the days of St. John, in one of the Churches over which he presided, a woman, a false prophetess, allowed by the Bishop of the Church to preach false doctrines to the people.

The Epistles are not letters written by St. John to the Churches, but they are messages dictated to him by Christ in a prophecy of a highly figurative and allegorical character. They are messages sent by One who sees the end from the beginning, and speaks of things that are not yet, as though they already were.

It is also consistent with this interpretation that Jezebel is threatened with judgment together with those who have corrupted themselves with her; just as the Harlot Babylon in the subsequent visions is judged by her Lovers in her latter end.

On the supposition that the ages of the Church are pointed out in these Epistles, it is consistent that we see in Sardis the result of Jezebel's teaching, permitted by the Christians of the preceding age.

Sardis is a dead Church. There are in her, as in every other Church in this world and in every age of the Church, a few faithful individuals. The fact of being in the communion of Sardis does not render vain the promises of God for the perfecting of their individual salvation. But the whole Church of Sardis, as a Church, is dead. She has a great name indeed, but it avails her little. She has a name that she lives, but is dead.[1]

We are reminded of the vision of the Fourth Seal. The Rider on that Pale Horse is emphatically called Death;

[1] Rev. iii. 1.

for he is the symbol of a most corrupt and worldly Christian ministry: a ministry bearing the name and authority of Christ, but doing the works of the Devil.

It is almost impossible to conceive that any Church in St. John's age could have been in this state. And it is therefore far more probable that the darkest ages of the Church's history are foreshadowed by this Epistle; the ages when the teaching of the Harlot had perfected the ignorance and superstition of her deluded subjects.

But it is very important to observe again that the spiritual death of the Church does not interfere with the salvation of the faithful individuals in it. The unbelief of men cannot under any circumstances render vain the promises of God conveyed by those men. The pardon of the criminal is valid, though the message of pardon be carried to him by an unworthy messenger.

There are two other Epistles which, on this supposition, must be supposed to relate to the general state of the Church in the latter ages of the world. There is first the message to the weak but faithful Church of Philadelphia; and then that to the proud and lukewarm Laodicea.

There are many expressions in these last two Epistles which seem to point to the end as approaching.

In the Epistle to Philadelphia there is mention of the hour of the temptation, reminding us of the vision, described immediately after the Sixth Seal, of the deliverance of the saints from the Last Great Judgment: "these are they which have come out of the great tribulation."[1] There is the expression, "Behold, I come quickly." And there is a manifest allusion to the last glorious Kingdom of God, the "City of God," "the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from God."[2]

[1] Rev. vii. 14. [2] Rev. iii. 10–12.

In the Epistle to the Laodiceans the expression, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,"[1] seems to point to the same great event.

Moreover, from the description of the state of these Churches we may conjecture that they probably refer to an age later than that of St. John, and if so, probably from their position to the latest ages of the Church.

The lukewarmness of Laodicea, combined as it is with pride and self-ignorance, seems to tally well with Our Lord's prophecy of the condition of the Church at the time of His Second Advent. Lukewarmness and practical infidelity are the prevalent characteristics of the last ages of the Church, as described in His prophecy. "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"[2] "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

And again, the weakness and open door of Philadelphia seems more consistent with an age of great mildness and civilisation, but of great deficiency in vigorous and uncompromising energy, than with the probable state of any Church in the age of the Martyrs.

But after all, these questions concerning the Seven Epistles to the Seven Churches are of very little practical importance. It is far more useful to remember how they all urge us to seek that which alone can be of any service to us in the end: our own individual salvation. This, indeed, is of far more importance to us than the knowledge of all the mysteries of prophecy.

Let us, then, read the Epistles with this view: that

[1] Rev. iii. 20.

[2] "Commemoratis his quæ specialiter in septem Asiæ gesta vel gerenda sint ecclesiis, generales totius Ecclesiæ luctas describit et palmas. Ubi sexto loco consulte . . . tentationem orbis universi futuram, seque promisit cito esse venturum; septimo autem, tepidam ponit Laodiceam. Filius enim hominis veniens, putas inveniet fidem in terra?"—Bede xii. 337.

they may warn us to avoid the fatal influences of surrounding corruption, and may support our patience and faith in every hour of sorrow and temptation.

From the example of Ephesus let us fear a falling away in zeal and earnestness, when the fervour of our first turning to God has begun to abate.

In persecution let us dwell upon the cheering words of the Risen Saviour to Smyrna.

Warned by Pergamos, let us cast out of our hearts the insidious doctrines of Balaam, the maxims of the covetous and of the wise in the things of this world.

When we think of Thyatira let us remember that there is an insidious Jezebel even in the bosom of the Church of Christ, whose seductive arts are most alluring, but whose end is, to be burned with the fire of judgment.

Let us never forget that even in the dead Sardis there are many living members of the Body of Christ who may go into that kingdom whence we may be for ever cast out; that we shall not be saved because we belong to a living Church, but because we act as those who have within them the spirit of eternal life.

Finally, if we fancy that we recognise in the mildness, toleration, and brotherly kindness of our own days the virtues of the feeble Philadelphia, let us remember that there is also a fearful description of a proud, wealthy, self-righteous, self-ignorant, and lukewarm Church which God shall utterly reject in spite of all her glory. Let us remember that the Lord says to the individual members of this Church, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent."[1]

[1] Rev. iii. 19.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ANTICHRIST

Harmony of the Apocalypse with the Prophecies of St. Paul

SINCE the time of the Apostles it has been the universal belief of the Church in all ages that the revelation of Antichrist will immediately precede the Second Advent of Christ. The reader will observe that the interpretation of the Apocalypse suggested in this volume is in perfect accordance with that belief. But it may be well to point out its consistency; although in doing so it will be necessary to repeat some of the arguments of a previous chapter.

The origin of the name is evident enough. Just as the disciples of Christ were early named Christians, so it would seem that the Great Predicted Opponent of Christ, called by St. Paul "the Man of Sin," "the Son of Perdition," "the Lawless One," came to be named Antichrist, at some time between the publication of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians and the writing of the Epistles of St. John; for that Apostle uses the name as one familiarly known to Christians. "Ye have heard," he writes, "that Antichrist cometh." [1]

The time of the Second Advent was not revealed either to the Apostles or even to the Angels of heaven. It was not revealed while Christ was on earth. "Of that day and hour

[1] 1 John ii. 18.

knoweth no one, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." It was not revealed to St. Paul or to any Christian in his day. "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."[1] There are symbolic numbers in the Apocalypse, but they are so enigmatically expressed that they keep the date of the Second Advent a profound secret; so much so, that we find the very writer of that prophecy using language, towards the end of his life, which clearly implies an expectation that the time of the end was at hand. "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour."[2]

It is certain, then, that the disciples of Christ knew not the time of the Second Advent. Their authority, therefore, as inspired teachers and infallible guides into all saving truth is in no degree diminished by their evident ignorance of the fact that many centuries were to elapse before the return of their Lord in the clouds of heaven. It was natural that they should sometimes expect Him soon. And the very keenness of their appreciation of the evil of their times, their recognition of the many types of the great Antichrist, which were already revealing the rapid development of that mystery of lawlessness of which St. Paul wrote, quickened their expectation of the coming Judgment.

And yet it is clear that they often thought it probable that Christ would not come for many ages. The language of St. Peter proves this. "There shall come in the last days," he says, "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the

[1] 1 Thess. v. 1, 2. [2] 1 John ii. 18. *R. V.*

beginning of the creation. . . . But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." [1]

What words could better express the ideas and expectations of the inspired Apostles on this subject?

They knew not the time of the Second Advent. They hoped it might be near ; they thought it quite possible that it might be very remote. But they regarded it as a day for which, whether it should be near or remote, it is the duty of all to prepare. And more than this, they knew, because it had been expressly revealed to them, that there would be, as the end drew near, "perilous times" from the wide spreading of immorality; that there would be scoffing philosophers, using the argument of continuance to prove the impossibility or exceeding improbability of any Second Advent at all; that there would be many deceivers denying the Incarnation and Divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity; and that, immediately before the Second Advent, there would be a Great Apostasy from the faith ; and, as its consequence, the revelation of one who should be the very incarnation of sin, of lawlessness, and of blasphemous rebellion against God.

That the disciples entertained this expectation is placed beyond all question by the language of St. Paul to the Thessalonians : "Let no man deceive you by any means : for that day will not come, except there come the apostasy first, and that wicked man be revealed, the son of perdition. . . . He who now holdeth down will do so unt he be taken out of the midst, and then shall the lawless one be

[1] 2 Peter iii. 3–10.

revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy with the spirit of his mouth, and bring to nothing with the brightness of his coming." [1]

The consistency of this prediction of Antichrist with the visions of the Apocalypse will appear, if we establish the following positions :

1. The prophecies of St. Paul and of the Apocalypse refer to the whole period of time between the Apostolic age and the Second Advent of Christ.

2. They both point to the working during the whole of this period of a principle or spirit of evil, preparing for and resulting in the perfect revelation of Antichrist at its close ; and they agree in their description of him.

3. They both recognise the existence, during the greater part of this period, of a providentially restraining power, holding down the spirit of utter lawlessness and openly professed infidelity.

1. Our first position then is this. The prophecies of St. Paul and of the Apocalypse refer to the whole period of time between the Apostolic age and the Second Advent of Christ.

The reader will observe how clearly this is shown to be the case, as regards the Apocalypse, in the above scheme of interpretation. Three great principles of evil are symbolised in its visions, and are represented as working in Christendom, during the whole time between the two Advents, against Christ and His faithful disciples. The Devil is symbolised by a Serpent ; the Rulers of this world by a Beast with Ten Horns ; while the False Prophet —a mixed power combining in one person worldly dominion and the assumed vicariate of Christ—is represented by the mixed symbol of a Beast, with the Horns of a Lamb, and the words of a Serpent.

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 3, 7, 8.

The Apocalypse, as we have seen, gives us, by means of a cluster of symbolic pictures, a singularly clear and complete analytical epitome of the origin, growth, and end of that historical conception which we understand by the expression Roman Christendom.

What does St. Paul tell the Thessalonians about all this? He too, though dwelling chiefly on the final revelation of Antichrist, evidently wishes his converts to understand that the fulfilment of his prophecy was already beginning. "The mystery of lawlessness," he writes, "is already working inwardly."[1]

And so this agreement between the two Apostles becomes even more apparent when we consider what St. Paul says with reference to our second position.

2. Both St. Paul and St. John point to the working from first to last of a principle or spirit of evil, preparing for and resulting in the perfect revelation of Antichrist; and they agree in their description of him.

We have seen above under what symbols this is revealed in the Apocalypse. St. Paul gives fewer details, but he predicts with no less precision in what forms these principles of evil would be exhibited during the future history of Christendom. The two prophecies will bear the closest comparison.

The minds of the Thessalonians were greatly agitated. They expected the immediate Advent of Christ. St. Paul hastens to reassure them, and warns them not to be thrown off their guard by any mistake about his own words, or by the pretended prophecies of enthusiasts. "'Let no man deceive you by any means.'[2] Whoever pretends to predict the time of the Second Advent is a deceiver, therefore do not listen to him. Have you already forgotten what I told you in my former letter? I then said, 'Of the times and the

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 7. *Conf.* Rev. i. 1, and 1 John iv. 3.
[2] 2 Thess. ii. 3.

seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.'[1] Neither I, therefore, nor any other apostle, nor even an angel from heaven,[2] can tell you when Christ will come again to judge the world. The Spirit of God, by which we are infallibly guided into all the truth, has not revealed this secret to us; but He has most plainly told us something else, which it is far more important for us to know. There will be a most complete falling away from the Christian faith before Christ comes; and He will be immediately preceded by One who will be the very incarnation of lawlessness and rebellion against God. And these are the signs by which you will infallibly recognise him when he comes. He will be very wicked. He will set himself against and raise himself above everything which bears the name of God, or is an object of human worship. But he will not abolish all religion, for he will put himself in God's place, and exhibit himself as the only object of worship. Carefully observe these signs, and beware of expecting Christ Himself, until this His Great Opponent has been revealed, and has drawn to himself the worship due only to Christ. This is very important, for there must, of course, be many imperfect types of Antichrist in every age, because the spirit of insubordination which will eventually produce him is even now working inwardly in the hearts of individuals, and in the general society of men. As the Spirit of Christ, working of old in the hearts of holy men, produced from time to time more or less striking types of Christ; just so the spirit of Antichrist working in the hearts of wicked men, now and at all future times, must produce in every age more or less perfect types of the Great Lawless One whom Christ will destroy by His sudden descent from heaven.

"You know perfectly, because I have often talked to you

[1] 1 Thess. v. 1, 2. [2] St. Matt. xxiv. 36.

on the subject, what it is which prevents the full disclosure of Antichrist. The spirit of anarchy is now held down by the power of government. And so, when the last possessor of this governing power shall be overthrown, the spirit of lawlessness will be set free, and out of an abyss of anarchy the Lawless One will come up, whom Christ 'will destroy with the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the brightness of his coming.'

"Recognise, then, these following as the signs of the coming of Antichrist, and the causes which will eventually lead to his full disclosure:

"The mighty inward working of Satan and the exhibition of false miracles; every kind of unrighteous deceit; a want of the love of truth, and, as its result, judicial blindness: all these, together with the spirit of anarchy, will eventually bring about the Apostasy from the Christian faith."

Such is the full sense and evident bearing of St. Paul's prophecy to the Thessalonians. The following are the exact words in which he predicts by what causes, always at work in the Church, the Apostasy from Christianity will eventually be brought about, and the Antichrist fully developed:

"Whose coming is by the inward working of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with every kind of wicked deceit in those who perish; because they have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."[1]

This, we observe, is St. Paul's description, not of the Lawless One himself, but of his coming; of the signs of his approach, and of the working of his spirit; of the causes which eventually produce him; the effects of the development of that germ of lawlessness which the Apostle recognised in his own day.

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 9-11.

To complete his picture of this development of evil in Christendom, beginning in his own age and ending in the disclosure of Antichrist, we must consider what he says on the same subject to Timothy.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly" (in spoken words) "that in the latter days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." [1]

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." [2]

That both these passages predict the unbelief, false doctrines, and gross immorality of apostatising Christendom, and not of the heathen world, is quite certain, because in the first passage he speaks of those who "shall depart from the faith," and in the second he describes these immoral men as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." It needed no special revelation, no spoken words of the Spirit, to enable the Apostle to give such a true and vivid picture of the unbelief and immorality of the heathen world, as we find in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans.

How consistent, then, is St. Paul's conception of the Christendom of the future with the symbolic pictures of the

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 1–3. [2] 2 Tim. iii. 1–5.

Apocalypse ! The Pope—symbolised in the Apocalypse as a Beast with the Horns of a Lamb and the voice of a Serpent ; as a deceiver of men ; a supporter of despots ; and as a false prophet working false miracles—is not the Antichrist of St. Paul. Neither is the Papal system, in spite of its falsehoods, superstitions, and idolatries, the Apostasy of St. Paul. But, nevertheless, this system foreshadows and prepares the way for the Great Falling Away and the revelation of the Lawless One. And so a considerable portion of St. Paul's prophecy is descriptive of the Papacy, and has been fulfilled and is still conspicuously in the course of fulfilment in its erroneous teaching.

The Antichrist of St. Paul, however, is symbolised in the Apocalypse by the Beast, which cometh up out of the Abyss and goeth into perdition ; and by the same symbol in the visions of Daniel. The correspondence between these symbols and St. Paul's Man of Sin is most exact.

The Roman World-power is symbolised by the prophet Daniel as a Beast with Ten Horns. The Antichrist in Daniel is a Horn coming up among these Ten, "more stout than his fellows," who "subdues three kings ;" who "wears out the saints of the most High ;" who "thinks to change times and laws ;" to whom is given "a mouth speaking great things," in consequence of whose great words the judgment of God consumes the whole World-power, and the Eternal Kingdom of Christ and His saints begins.

A like figure in the Apocalypse symbolises the same Roman World-power, in every age and in its final development ; and the description of this last enemy of God given by Daniel, and repeated and amplified by St. John, harmonises exactly with the prophecy of St. Paul.

St. Paul describes him as the result of apostasy from the Christian faith, and of anarchy ; and calls him the Son of

Perdition. In the Apocalypse "he cometh up out of the abyss, and goeth into perdition." [1]

St. Paul describes him as "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." In the Apocalypse, "he openeth his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven." [2]

St. Paul describes him as "sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." In the Apocalypse he receives divine worship, and is for a long period of time in close union with the Church, being in fact the Head of it, the President in its councils, and the Executor of its laws, supporting the Harlot and committing spiritual fornication with the Lamb's Wife, until the infidelity of his subjects enables him to cast her off altogether; then at last he becomes the Open Adversary of the Lamb, the fully revealed Antichrist.[3]

St. Paul does not attribute the working of false miracles to the Antichrist himself, but speaks of "lying signs and wonders," "every kind of wicked deceit," a disregard of truth, "strong delusion," sent as a punishment from God, and especially the spirit of lawlessness working from the very beginning, as the causes which produce him. In fact St. Paul plainly predicts that Infidelity and Anarchy will be the natural results of the false miracles of Romanism, and of that gross corruption of Christianity which we call the Papal system.

What do we find when we turn to the Apocalypse? The great Beast, who "cometh up out of the abyss and goeth into perdition," for a long time supports the Church ("sitteth in the temple of God" [4]), but in the end destroys

[1] Rev. xvii. 8. [2] Rev. xiii. 6.
[3] Rev. xiii. 4, 8; xvii. 3–7, 16, 17; xi. 7; xiii. 7.
[4] 2 Thess. ii. 4.

it, and becomes the open enemy of God. But, although he receives his Throne from the Serpent, and accepts the worship of all men, he works no miracles himself, but derives his influence from the False miracles of another, of a False Prophet; his power is the result of the effect of these lying wonders on the minds of men. This is expressed with singular clearness in the 13th and 17th chapters of the Apocalypse. It is the Second Beast, with Lamb's Horns, and the deceitful voice of the Serpent, the symbol of the Pope, who works the false miracles; deceives the inhabitants of the earth; raises the Image of fallen Empire; slays, persecutes, and subjects to civil disabilities all who will not worship it; and who—strange mystery which yet remains to be solved—is found at the last, even after the fall of his own Babylon, like the false prophet of the King of Moab, by the side of the Antichrist in his last battle against the people of the Lord, and like him is slain by the sword in that battle. Up to the end, too, as it seems, he continues to work his lying miracles before the Antichrist, and by means of them deceives the worshippers of the world.

The prodigious development of the Papal power, the power of the individual Pope, in these days; the concentration in his own person of all spiritual and ecclesiastical authority; the assumption, almost by his own act, of the divine attribute of infallibility; and the facility with which he can dispense with all moral and political obligations when it is his interest to do so: all these signs point ominously to the part which the Pope may yet have to play in preparing the way for, if not in supporting, the final Antichrist.

If the Beast with Lamb's Horns, the False Prophet of Christendom, really is the symbol of the Pope, the following passage, describing clearly the last battle of Christ with Antichrist, is very suggestive: "I saw the Beast,

and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the Beast was taken, and WITH HIM THE FALSE PROPHET THAT WROUGHT MIRACLES BEFORE HIM, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." [1]

How like the end of Balaam ! "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." [2]

The harmony of prophecy will be even more apparent if we can establish our third position.

3. The two Apostles recognise the existence, during the greater part of the interval between the Advents, of a Providentially Restraining Power, holding down the spirit of lawlessness and openly professed infidelity.

This is, perhaps, the most crucial test of the soundness of any interpretation of the Apocalypse. Is it consistent with the obvious meaning of the prophecy of St. Paul? Does it harmonise with what St. Paul predicts about the Restraining Power, its removal, and the Revelation of Antichrist which follows it?

The writer ventures to hope that the impartial reader, who has mastered his scheme of interpretation, will consider that it will bear the application of this test of its truthfulness; that the explanation of those symbolisms in the Apocalypse which refer to the Restraining Power admit of an easy and unforced harmony with the predictions of St. Paul.

We, at the end of the nineteenth century, look back upon that great picture of history which, in the days of the Apostles, existed only in the mind of God. We observe in Roman Christendom in every age the existence of two powerful and antagonistic social forces: the power of Imperial

[1] Rev. xix. 19, 20. [2] Num. xxxi. 8.

Government, and the spirit of lawlessness ; the one holding down, or restraining, and the other resisting from time to time, with more or less success.

There is scarcely any duty so frequently and so emphatically enjoined on all Christians by the Apostles, as that of willing obedience in all lawful matters to the Existing Civil Government. They regarded the spirit of rebellion against government as essentially Antichristian. The Christian was to lead a blameless life, and to conciliate the minds of unbelievers by his evident love of peace and order, and glad submission to law. And this is the more remarkable when we remember the character of the Imperial Government under which the Apostles were living, the monsters of iniquity who wore the crimson robe, and the brutal ferocity with which they often persecuted the Church of Christ.

The prophecy of St. Paul speaks of these two antagonistic social forces. Of the one he speaks with great plainness and calls it the "mystery of lawlessness." For obvious reasons he is unwilling to write plainly about the other. And it was unnecessary, because he had told the Thessalonians all about it before. "Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth," or holdeth down, as the Greek word literally means.

That St. Paul refers to the Imperial Power of Rome, the government existing in his day, has been the almost universal belief of the Christian Church in all ages. This accounts for his caution. The Romans regarded their Empire as eternal ; and any hint at the removal of the Imperial Power would have needlessly provoked persecution.

When we closely examine the prophecy we find that St. Paul speaks of these two social forces at one time as

abstract principles, and at another as concrete embodiments of these principles in a person.

The Final Antichrist, the immediate forerunner of Christ, is a personal ruler of enormous power ; taking the place of another, who is removed out of his way.

He is "the man of sin," a Hebraism for "the sinful man." He is "the son of perdition," a Hebraism meaning "one who is to be destroyed." He is "the lawless one," whom the Lord will slay. He has enormous power, for "he setteth himself forth as God," having abolished all other worship. Such is St. Paul's Antichrist ; an Infidel Ruler thrown to the surface out of the abyss of Anarchy ; the concrete embodiment of the ever-working principle of Anarchy and rebellion against God and established government.

But he uses abstract terms when he is speaking of his coming, of that course of preparation for him which was beginning in the Apostolic age. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." His "coming is by the working of Satan," by "false miracles," by "wicked deceit," by disregard of truth, by "strong delusion," by belief in a lie, by infidelity, by "pleasure in unrighteousness."

It is the same when he is speaking of the Power of Government. He uses an abstract term, the neuter participle, "that which holdeth down," that system which keeps a check upon the spirit of lawlessness ; until he has to speak of the Ruler whose overthrow makes room for the Antichrist. Then he says, "He who now holdeth down will do so, until he is taken out of the midst."

The Imperial Power, then existing, was to last and to hold down the spirit of lawlessness, until shortly before the revelation of Antichrist. Roman Government, represented by the Emperor, was to be the providentially restraining power which was to keep in check the ever-working spirit

of infidelity and rebellion. Its removal was to set free a Spirit of Anarchy which would result after a time in the full disclosure of "the lawless one."

And it is Apostasy from Christianity, we must observe, which leads to the removal of the Restraining Sovereign Power: "except the falling away come first."

Now St. Paul, as we have seen, did not pretend to know how long the restraining principle of government would continue to hold down the spirit of rebellion. And we cannot imagine him to have had any idea of the amazing changes which were to take place in the government of Christendom before the end.

What he did know and plainly predicted was this, that, whether the time was near or remote, Christ would not come until Antichrist had been fully revealed, and Antichrist would not be revealed until the Apostasy from Christianity had taken place, and had led to the overthrow of the Governing Powers then existing in the world.

It is a notorious historical fact, which, as we have seen above, has been much insisted upon by several modern historians, that the Roman Imperial Power, although it has so often changed hands, can scarcely yet be said to have come to an end. The Sovereigns of Christendom are, not only in theory but also in fact, the heirs, possessors, and governors of the Roman world. The Imperial Power was destroyed indeed by Napoleon I., and government was weakened by that convulsion which brought him to the surface, and which was, no doubt, the beginning of the removal of St. Paul's Restraining Power. But it was only the beginning, a foreshadowing of the evil to come. Christianity and the Imperial authority were restored by Napoleon, and the Pope soon came to terms with him, as he probably will with the Final Antichrist. And when Napoleon also had passed away, and society from mere exhaustion

had again settled down, legitimate government seemed to regain its restraining power over the still working spirit of Anarchy.

But this was only in appearance and for a time. A spirit of unbelief and lawlessness was set free at the time of that Great Revolution, of which we are only now beginning to realise the irresistible energy.

And now the reader, who has carefully studied the interpretation of the Apocalypse above suggested, will begin to see its accordance with the prophecy of St. Paul. He will remember the explanations there given of the symbolisms of the Restraining Power.

Just as St. Paul speaks of the mystery of lawlessness as working even in his own day, but as restrained until the time of the Apostasy by strong government ; so the Apocalypse symbolically describes the principles of evil as ever working, but working under Powerful Restraint for a certain fixed period of time, and then as being set free for the final struggle.

In chapter vii. 1, 2, the prophet sees the instruments of the last and most universal Judgment which is to fall upon wicked Christendom held back from hurting the earth until the saints of God have been all sealed upon their foreheads.

Then, when the Sixth Angel sounds his Trumpet, the word goes forth to let loose these Four Angels, or messengers of the wrath of God on apostatising Christendom.[1]

And, in further explanation of the same event, when the Sixth Vial is poured out, the spirits of evil which had been hitherto working under restraint are set completely free, and at once proceed to bring about the Great Apostasy, which ends in the last battle of Christ with Antichrist, and the final destruction of the Beast and his False Prophet. These

[1] Rev. ix. 13–15.

spirits issue from the three symbols which represent the Devil, the World, and the Pope. They come out of the mouth of the Serpent, of the Beast and of the False Prophet.[1] They bring about, therefore, the Apostasy of which St. Paul speaks, and which causes the revelation of Antichrist.

An Angel, in other visions, is represented, the reader will remember, as putting a powerful restraint upon the Serpent for a long period of time; at the end of which, this restraint is removed and the Great Apostasy is the consequence.

The Serpent is represented in the Apocalypse as being withheld for a long time from acting as the open enemy of the Church. He is cast out of heaven; he is removed from the arena of the visions; he is chained and shut up in the Abyss, that he may not deceive the Gentiles. And during his imprisonment and absence from the scene, the Beast —who comes out of the Abyss when the Serpent enters it—sits upon his throne, and acts with his authority, while the False Prophet speaks with his voice. But at the close of this period, Satan, who has been working under restraint, is loosed from his prison; he goes forth from the Abyss; he deceives the Gentiles again; he brings about a complete Apostasy from Christianity, and rebellion against all authority, divine and human.

Again, we know as a matter of history that the establishment of Christianity in the Roman world—its connection with civil government—although from the sins of the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of Christendom it led to the deep corruption of religion and to the persecution of the more faithful members of the Church, was nevertheless a powerful Chain of Restraint laid upon Satan; and for a long period of time prevented him from bringing about that open and professed unbelief and rebellion against divine and human law

[1] Rev. xvi. 13, 14; *conf.* xix. 19, 20.

which it is his constant purpose to effect, and which prophecy tells us he will eventually cause. Christian Civil Government is, humanly speaking, the only power which can effectually hold down the ever-working spirit of Unbelief and Anarchy, a truth which we shall probably soon learn to our cost. And so St. John beautifully symbolises this same Restraining Power of Civil Government of which St. Paul speaks.

The Church, as a Woman, fleeing from the persecutions of the Serpent whom Christ has cast down out of heaven, has a place of safety provided for her in the wilderness of this world, where she is to be supported, not quite up to the end, but for a fixed time, for 1,260 years. And she is borne to this place of comparative safety upon the Two Wings of the Great Roman Eagle.[1] The condition, however, of true Christians—the "remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"[2]—is represented as one of persecution by the civil power acting for Satan during his period of restraint. And elsewhere, during the same period of 1,260 years, this purer part of the Church is symbolised by the Witnesses of Jesus, who bear their testimony against the evil of their times, clothed in sackcloth.[3]

Thus the connection of the Christian Church with the Emperors and Kings of Roman Christendom is symbolically and prophetically described in the Apocalypse under these two widely different aspects which it really presents to the student of history, looking back upon the past, and taking a comprehensive view of the good and evil results of the formation of the Great Latin Hierarchy.

The powers of civil government have been at once the supporters and the corrupters and persecutors of the Christian Church. Roman government was the Great Eagle on

[1] Rev. xii. 6, 14. [2] Rev. xii. 17. [3] Rev. xi. 3.

whose wings the Providence of God bore the Christian Church over that deluge of anarchy which changed the face of the old Latin world, and landed her in her appointed place in the wilderness as the established religion of the mightiest nations of the earth.

Thus in the visions of the Apocalypse and in the prophecy of St. Paul the great power of this world is represented as holding down the spirit of unbelief and anarchy, and so supporting the Christian Church for a certain time ; and then, in consequence of a wide-spreading Apostasy from Christianity, as falling into the hands of a Ruler who takes the place of the Christian Sovereigns, and is himself the very incarnation of sin, of lawlessness, and of blasphemous rebellion against God.

In the prophecy of St. Paul lawlessness and unbelief are kept in check by Government until the Apostasy sets them free, overthrows Christian Government, and substitutes in its place the Government of Antichrist, a professed Infidel and Enemy of Christ, with a new religion of his own, of which he is himself the head and centre, and the only object of human worship.

In the Apocalypse the great power of worldly rulers, from the beginning to the end, is represented by one symbol, that of a Beast with Ten Horns and Seven Heads. But he varies in character and actions at different periods, the World-power being in reality in the hands of rulers of very different characters at different times. At one time the civil powers are the Two Wings of the Great Eagle of old Rome, rescuing the persecuted woman from the wrath of the Serpent. At another time, during the 1,260 years, the ruler of this world persecutes the faithful Witnesses of Jesus who bear their testimony in sackcloth ; for during this time he is the supporter of the Church indeed, but of

the Church no longer the pure Bride of the Lamb, but the Harlot of the Beast.

At the end of this fixed time of 1,260 years the World-power, still represented by the same symbol, is more fully revealed as the enemy of Christ. The supreme power has, in fact, fallen into different hands; it is still the Supreme Power in the world, but he who now holds it has taken the place of one removed out of his way. That civil government which long partly supported and partly corrupted the Church has now openly professed unbelief, and the Ruler who now reigns and fights against Christ has "come up out of the abyss" of unbelief and anarchy, and "goeth into perdition." He slays and silences the Witnesses of Jesus for three years and a half; he destroys even the corrupt Church, the Babylon which his predecessors have so long supported; he makes war with the saints and overcomes them; he gathers his armies together for his last great battle with the Son of God, at whose Advent he is taken, and, be it observed again, with the False Prophet still by his side, is cast into the lake of fire.

In both prophecies, then, it is the Power of Government which holds down the Spirit of Anarchy, until it is removed out of the midst. Civil Government, we have every reason to believe, is the Restraining Power of which St. Paul speaks. But when we turn to the Apocalypse we find a much fuller account of the part which Civil Government performs in the great Drama of Roman Christendom. The Civil Government of Roman Christendom, the Christian Emperors and Kings, are symbolised by a Beast with Ten Horns. But this Beast is the symbol of the possessors of the great power of this world, not in one period only, but in every age, from the beginning to the end. The World-power, we know, is constantly changing hands; and not only so, in its attitude towards the Church and the

Christian faith it is frequently varying. The prophetic spirit, therefore, in drawing a general symbolic picture of the World-power, must give it a character suitable to this breadth of view and universality of application. The Rulers of the Roman world have not always or wholly been hostile to Christianity or to the Christian Church. They have been, under Providence, the chief powers who have held down the Spirit of Lawlessness and Unbelief. And thus the establishment of the Church by the Princes of Christendom has been a place of refuge providentially appointed for her, without which, humanly speaking, she must long ago have perished from the face of the earth.

In the breaking up, therefore, of this system of Civil and Ecclesiastical Government in Roman Christendom—this strange mixture of good and evil, which has held down, indeed, for ages the Spirit of Anarchy and Unbelief, and yet by misuse of power, by civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, by gross immorality, by lying miracles, by blasphemous falsehoods, by puerile superstitions, by amazing usurpations, has alienated from the truth the minds of men and nations—in the gradual disintegration of this once marvellously compact Hierarchy, we seem to recognise the beginning of the removal of St. Paul's Restraining Power.

There are certain mysterious notices of time, from which we know for our comfort that the times and seasons, though not revealed to us, are fixed in the mind of the Omniscient. For an obvious reason, known to all careful students of prophecy, they cannot, on any theory of interpretation, reveal to us the time of the Second Advent of Christ. Even if these 1,260 days symbolise, as there is every reason to believe, 1,260 years, it is quite impossible to fix with anything approaching to certainty the date of their commencement. The writer conjectures, but he dares not to regard it as anything better than a conjecture, that the age of Charle-

magne is a great prophetical epoch. The suggestion of Hengstenberg seems very probable, that the thousand years of the supreme dominion of the Christian Church—during which Satan was prevented by government from openly opposing Christ; during which he himself was imprisoned in the abyss, out of which the Beast came to act for him; during which also the bodies of the martyrs of Jesus, who will not worship the Beast, are slain, and their souls are seen by the prophet in the Paradise of God—commenced in the year 800 and ended in 1800. If this be so, it is probable, but only probable, that the 1,260 years should date from the same time.

The reader will find these symbolic numbers fully explained and compared with those of Daniel in the next chapter.

We cannot tell, and it is useless even to conjecture, whether the coming of Antichrist is near or still remote from our own days. It is of more importance to know "the signs of the times." To be ignorant of them is unwise and dangerous. For these Our Lord expects His faithful servant to be ever on the watch. It is the hypocrite, in His opinion, who cannot discern them. "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring." [1]

The prophets warn us that the dawn of the Second Advent will present a threatening aspect. And even now we must be blind optimists indeed if we do not see that the sky is red and lowring. What sign is there, of which the prophets speak, which is not forcing itself upon our notice?

The means of intercourse are rapid beyond all precedent, and as a consequence knowledge of all kinds is increasing,

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 2, 3.

and the Gospel, though little accepted, is published widely over the world. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."[1] "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."[2] "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."[3]

But although there is this increase and wide diffusion of all kinds of knowledge, both secular and religious, the faith of the Christian is passing through a trial to which it has never been exposed before. It is a time when "many shall be purified and made white and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."[4]

The very indifference of the world, the very absence of persecution, is a danger, for "by peace shall he destroy many;"[5] and the last condition of the Church is one of feeble witness, which leaves in ease and security the consciences of the wicked. "They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth," but now have been slain by the Beast and are silent.[6] It is difficult not to recognise the foreshadowing of the fulfilment of such prophecies as these in the present attitude of unbelievers towards the Church and doctrines of Christ.

We have also many amongst us—indeed they are the leaders of that which is called Modern Thought—who are fulfilling to the letter the prediction of St. Peter, using the argument of universally-observed continuance to prove the impossibility of entertaining any serious belief in such

[1] Dan. xii. 4. [2] Rev. xiv. 6. [3] St. Matt. xxiv. 14.
[4] Dan. xii. 10. [5] Dan. viii. 25. [6] Rev. xi. 10.

miracles as the Advent of Christ, the Resurrection of the dead, or the Judgment of the world.[1]

Surely, also, we may adopt as our own the language of St. John, and recognise on every side of us the types of Antichrist. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." "As ye have heard that the Antichrist cometh, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."[2]

It is, indeed, no longer possible to shut our eyes to the fact, that whether the time of the full revelation of Anti christ is near or remote, the predicted signs of his coming are darkening the horizon even of the immediate future.

We are brought face to face in these our own days with cold indifference; openly professed and energetic infidelity; and a widely and rapidly spreading spirit of lawlessness and ruthless violence, which, unless it can be kept in check by government, must eventually destroy the very fabric of society, as it did at the end of the last century, and must produce a state of confusion and anarchy such as the world has never yet seen.

There is still, God be thanked, much earnest faith and holy living; and up to the end, we may hope, there will be a large and increasing number of isolated Witnesses of Jesus, bearing a fearless testimony, though still it may be "clothed in sackcloth."

But the witness of the Church, as a united and organised body, having authority over the consciences of men, is growing weaker and weaker every day. She has long forgotten the words of her Divine Master: "that they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."[3] "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 3–5. [2] 1 John ii. 18, 22. [3] St. John xvii. 21.

if ye have love one to another."[1] And a spirit of division, unbelief, and resistance to all existing authority is now destroying the peace, endangering the safety, and weakening the testimony of the healthiest and most vigorous branch of the Church, even in our own hitherto highly favoured country.

Yes, our country has hitherto been a highly favoured country, the land of peace and contentment, of prosperity and freedom. It remains to be seen what it will be when it has robbed the Sanctuary of God,[2] secularised its schools and seats of learning, and received into its legislative body, not only unbelievers in Christianity, but those who openly profess atheism, and teach doctrines which strike at the roots of all morality and the blessings of social life. When such are the signs of the times the Christian patriot can scarcely help seeing that "the sky is red and lowring," and calling to mind the words of the sacred historian. The reformation of Jehu was imperfect. He and his people preferred what seemed expedient to that which was right; and then we read the words which seem to follow as a necessary consequence. "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short; and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel."[3]

The outlook of the Church, as a whole, is, it must be admitted, gloomy enough. But for the faithful individual Christian there is ever light in the darkness. This very Apostasy from the Christian faith, and the looming in the distance of that strange religion of the future—the product of a Christless Christianity; of the theories of those who contract all belief within the limits of human experience; and of the dreams of those who, entirely giving up all faith in a conscious life beyond the grave, worship Humanity, a mere mental conception of the Human race, in the place of the Ever-living and Eternal God—these

[1] St. John xiii. 35. [2] Mal. iii. 8, 12. [3] 2 Kings x. 32.

evident delusions of Satan, the great deceiver, again released from his temporary prison, are the plainest possible miraculous evidences of the veracity and supernatural origin of those Sacred Writings which have so plainly predicted them.

This striking fulfilment of prophecy forms a solid ground for our feet as we walk through the "slough of Despond;" as we perceive "the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth." As individual believers we have nothing to fear, if we are conscious that we have received upon our foreheads the seal of the living God, and have made up our minds that we will not worship the Beast or his Image, or be branded as his slaves. For it was for the support of our faith in all ages, but especially in these latter days, that the prophecies were written; even as the prophet himself declares, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."[1] "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."[2] "Seal not the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. . . . Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."[3]

[1] Rev. xiii. 10. [2] Rev. xix. 10. [3] Rev. xxii. 10, 12.

CHAPTER XVIII

TIMES AND SEASONS

MUCH light may be thrown upon the interpretations suggested in this volume from the chronological prophecies of the Apocalypse compared with those of Daniel.

Prophetic dates bear to the prediction of things future the same relation which historical dates bear to the narration of things past. And as prophecy is intended to teach us practical principles and to give us only a dim outline of future events, so it is the object of prophetic chronology to afford us only a very general idea of their times. But, nevertheless, chronology is nearly as important to prophecy as it is to history. It enables us to harmonise, to synchronise, and to identify one prediction with another; just as it helps us to arrange and narrate without confusion the history of past transactions. Chronology may be regarded as the skeleton over which the living substance of history is placed, and which gives stability and symmetry to the whole body. And we may consider prophetic chronology to form the framework and compartments of that marvellous picture on which the Prescient Spirit of Jehovah has portrayed, for our warning and comfort, the outlines and shadows of futurity.

It may be well, before we examine these chronological prophecies, to make a few general observations on this interesting subject.

1. There is such a thing as chronological prophecy.

Not only has God predicted important events, He has also predicted the times at which they would take place, or the periods of time they would occupy. Of these prophecies the more important are, the prophecy of the coming deluge, in the days of Noah, when God told the Patriarch that He would destroy the world with a flood, but that He would first give men the space of 120 years for repentance; "His days," he says, "shall be an hundred and twenty years:"[1] the prophecy to Abraham of the wanderings and captivity of his children previous to the Exodus, "They shall afflict them four hundred years:"[2] the prophecy of the time during which the Israelites should wander in the wilderness, "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years:"[3] the promise of deliverance given to the captive Jews, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you:"[4] and Daniel's prophecy of our Lord's crucifixion, "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off."[5]

2. These are all examples of chronological prophecy. But it is to be observed that, although they were given in such precise and literal terms, they were not sufficiently clear to enable men to know beforehand the exact time when the event predicted would happen. And this slight obscurity generally arose from the difficulty of fixing in each instance the exact date of the beginning of the predicted period. The prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the return from Babylon, and that of Daniel concerning the Coming of Christ, were sufficiently clear to lead to a strong impression that those events were at hand, but not to enable any one to specify the exact year when they would happen.

3. All these chronological prophecies are literal and not figurative prophecies. No symbolism or figurative

[1] Gen. vi. 3. [2] Gen. xv 13. [3] Numb. xiv. 33.
[4] Jer. xxix. 10. [5] Dan. ix. 26.

description of the event predicted is employed, and therefore there are no symbolical or figurative notices of time.

When a single Beast or man is put by the prophets for a kingdom, not only are his parts and qualities put for the analogous parts and qualities of the kingdom, but also the days of his acting are put for years.[1]

4. It is important to observe that prophecies of future events can be just as plain and easy to understand as narratives of those which are past, if only they are predicted in simple, prosaic, unenigmatical language. And this is very often the case. When it is so, the prophecy is generally plain and unenigmatical in all its parts. The events are plainly spoken of, and so are their dates.

But we must not compare such literal prophecies with the Allegories of Daniel and St. John.

It is difficult to conceive why, in these Allegories, three years and a half should be called forty-two months, or 1,260 days, if a literal period of three years and a half were intended. For there is no example in the Bible where a space of time exceeding a year is described as so many days.

We have many prophecies in which days are spoken of. "Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights."[2] "Within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head."[3] "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."[4] "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."[5]

In all such literal prophecies days are really meant: and it would be absurd to think otherwise. But then, in

[1] "'Ως ἀλλαχοῦ κατὰ προφητείαν εἰς ἐνιαυτοὺς αἱ ἡμέραι παραλαμβάνονται."—*Bib. Vet. Pat. Galland*, ii. 376.
"'Ημέραν εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν τέθεικά σοι."—Sept. Ezek. iv. 6.

[2] Gen. vii. 4.
[3] Gen. xl. 13, 19.
[4] Jonah iii. 4.
[5] St. John ii. 19.

the first place, all these prophecies are literal; and, secondly, they speak of periods less than a year.

But how do we find one, three, or seven years spoken of in literal prophecies? Not as 365, 1,095, or 2,555 days. There is not a single example of any such mode of reckoning in any literal prophecy which speaks literally of a period of time.

"There come seven years of great plenty . . . seven years of famine."[1] Not 2,555 days. "At the return of the year, the King of Syria shall come up against thee."[2] "Within three years the glory of Moab shall be contemned."[3]

Why, then, in the Allegories of Daniel and St. John should there be a different mode of reckoning? Why, if they mean three years and a half, do they not say three years and a half instead of 1,260 or 1,290 days?

There is only one conceivable and satisfactory reason. They allegorise the event, and therefore they allegorise the time also. They are consistent throughout. They describe future events figuratively, and therefore they describe their times figuratively also.

A single Beast stands for an historical idea, for a Dynasty, for a succession of rulers acting, in the main, on the same principles, and during a great number of generations.

The imagery of the Allegory is, therefore, consistent. One Beast could not be supposed to exist for 1,260 years. But he might exist three years and a half. The Dynasty, however, was to exist 1,260 years. Therefore the period of the Beast's existence is not called three years and a half, but 1,260 days.

5. Moreover, this interpretation of the days of symbolic prophecies is suggested in Scripture.

In the first place, the day is made, as it were, the

[1] Gen. xli. 29, 30. [2] 1 Kings xx. 22. [3] Isaiah xvi. 14.

symbol of the year in the Book of Numbers. The spies were occupied forty days in searching out the land of Canaan. And when the Israelites provoked God by refusing to enter the promised land, He punished them by making them wander in the wilderness forty years; that is to say, He gave them a year of wandering for each day of searching out the land. "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." [1]

But, secondly, this typical use of the day is more clearly shown in the vision of Ezekiel.

The prophet was made a sign or symbol to the children of Israel of the Divine forbearance, and of the punishment at last about to fall upon them. God did not command Ezekiel to tell the children of Israel in plain words that He had put up with their sins for 390 years, and that He was now going to destroy their city. He commanded him to set this before their eyes in a very impressive and figurative manner. He told him to represent the siege of Jerusalem by a picture drawn upon a tile, and then to lie on his side 390 days, that he might be a sign to the people of the Divine forbearance during that number of years. "This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year." [2] (Heb.—"A day for a year, a day for a year.")

[1] Numb. xiv. 34. [2] Ezek. iv. 3–6.

Taking each day, then, as the symbol of a year, let us examine the prophetic notices of time which occur in the Apocalypse, and compare them with those of Daniel.

We have to deal with the following numbers: 2,300, 1,290, and 1,335 days in the visions of Daniel, and 1,260 days in those of the Apocalypse.

The visions of Daniel predicted three great pollutions of the Sanctuary of God by the dominant powers of the world.

1. The desolation caused by Antiochus Epiphanes, about the year 170 B.C.

2. The desolation caused by Pagan Rome, A.D. 70.

3. The desolation caused by the rulers of mediæval and modern Europe, from the age of Charlemagne, A.D. 800.[1]

Speaking of the second of these, Our Saviour says, "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet;"[2] an expression which He

[1] "Alii . . . . βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως interpretantur de Antiocho Epiphane: . . . . alii referunt ad gravissimas calamitates, quæ Judæis a Romanis obvenerunt; . . . . alii . . . . ad Antichristum et ad idololatriam ab ipso invehendam in fine sæculi."—*Suiceri Thesaurus.*

The Church is in the wilderness (ἔρημος) during this last desolation (ἐρήμωσις).

"Aspernatio dicitur, quando exasperatur Deus, eo quod idola pro Deo colantur, vel cum dogma hæreticorum introducitur in Ecclesiis. Aversio autem quod stabiles homines signis falsis et portentis seducti avertantur de salute."—Victorinus.

Thus, as Bishop Newton observes, "The setting up of the abomination of desolation appears to be a general phrase, and comprehensive of various events. It is applied by the writer of the first book of Maccabees (i. 54) to the profanation of the temple by Antiochus, and his setting up the image of Jupiter Olympius upon the altar of God. It is applied by Our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 15) to the destruction of the city and temple by the Romans."—Vol. ii. 213.

[2] St. Mark xiii. 14.

elsewhere explains to mean, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies." [1]

But we have already seen that Our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem included also many predictions relating to the latter days of the world. In like manner we must conclude that He does not mean to confine the predictions of Daniel to the desolation of the literal city of the Jewish race.

Moreover, it is impossible to read the prophecies of Daniel without perceiving that they look much further into the future than either the age of Antiochus or that of Vespasian and Titus.

One of his visions manifestly relates to Antiochus. But another as manifestly points to a Desolating Ruler who should rise up long after the age of the ancient Roman Emperors.

In the vision relating to Antiochus he hears one angel ask another this question: "How long is the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot?" [2] That is to say, to how long a period of time does this particular vision refer? The answer is, "Unto two thousand three hundred days: then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

It is clear that this vision referred to Antiochus. For the prophet was told that the Rough Goat which he saw was the King of Grecia; that is, Alexander the Great. He was shown that, upon the death of Alexander, "four kingdoms would stand up out of the nation;" and that the particular desolator alluded to would rise up amongst these four.

This vision, then, speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it also no less clearly speaks of some very remote time,

[1] St. Luke xxi. 20. [2] Dan. viii. 13.

when the sanctuary of God will be finally cleansed. And it predicts that the sanctuary will be cleansed after 2,300 days.

In another vision Daniel is evidently not speaking of Antiochus at all, but of some more modern Ruler, who was to rise up amongst those Ten Kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was to be divided.

He says of this Ruler that he shall have power over the saints for "a time, times, and a half;"[1] and that his power shall last until the judgment takes place, followed by the complete and final establishment of God's Kingdom.

It is certain that this vision does not relate to Antiochus, because the Desolating Ruler here spoken of is not one of Four, but one of Ten. That is to say, he is not one of the Four Dynasties into which Alexander's Empire was divided, but one of the Ten Dynasties into which the Fourth or Roman Monarchy was divided.

The clearest distinction, then, exists between the Little Horn spoken of in the eighth chapter, and the Little Horn spoken of in the seventh chapter, of the prophet Daniel. The former comes out of One of the Four Kingdoms into which the Empire of Alexander was divided; the latter out of One of the Ten Kingdoms into which the Empire of Rome was divided. Accordingly, these two symbols, relating to different events, are connected with different periods of time.

The former vision, relating to Antiochus, is said to continue 2,300 days; but the latter, relating to a Kingdom of Mediæval Europe, is said to continue for a time, times, and a half, a period of time evidently identical with Daniel's 1,290 days, and with St. John's 1,260 days.

Now, Daniel represents the Little Horn, which rises up

[1] Dan. vii. 22–27.

amongst the Ten Kingdoms of Europe, as retaining his power up to the very judgment day; and he afterwards says that he holds this power for "a time, times, and a half." In the twelfth chapter he attributes the same period of time to the Power which domineers over the Church in the latter ages of the world. "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" This is the angel's question. The answer is, "For a time, times, and a half." The angel then explains this expression by the following words: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."[1] It would appear from the following words that some great final trial of the saints will take place at the close of this period of 1,290 days, and that those will be blessed indeed who pass through it unhurt. For the angel immediately adds these words, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."[2]

Such are the notices of time which we find in the visions of Daniel; in that book which was, by its own showing, to be a sealed book; that is to say, a book unintelligible to man until it had been unsealed by the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. We expect, therefore, to find in the Unsealed Book of the Apocalypse similar expressions and similar notices of time by which we may explain the visions of Daniel.

Such expressions, indeed, we do find, and such notices of time connected with them, not, of course, bearing any reference to Antiochus Epiphanes, but only to the Tyrannical Rulers of more modern times.

Daniel says of the Little Horn, which rises up amongst the Ten Horns of the Fourth Monarchy and which subdues three of them, "he shall speak great words against the

[1] Dan. xii. 7, 11. [2] Dan. xii. 12.

Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws ; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time." [1] Speaking evidently of the same person, he elsewhere says that his power shall last "for a time, times, and a half : " and that his desolation of the sanctuary shall continue "a thousand two hundred and ninety days." [2] He also describes the desolation which, referring primarily to Antiochus, extends to the end of the world, as the treading underfoot of the sanctuary and people of God, "to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot." [3]

Expressions of similar import are connected in the Apocalypse with similar notices of time. And there can be no question that the Hebrew and Christian prophets are intended to throw light one upon another.

The tyranny of the Rulers of Mediæval and Modern Christendom, commencing with Charlemagne and continuing to the end, is symbolised by the same or very similar images.

"The holy city shall they tread underfoot forty and two months." [4]

To the Ten-horned Beast "power is given to continue forty and two months." [5]

The Woman, that is the Church, is fed in the wilderness "1,260 days" and "a time, times, and a half." [6]

And, finally, the Witnesses of Jesus bear their sorrowful testimony to the truth "1,260 days." [7]

We are led, then, by such notices of time to classify and identify these predictions. There can be no question that the desolation of the sanctuary spoken of by Daniel must

[1] Dan. vii. 25. [2] Dan. xii. 7, 11. [3] Dan. viii. 13.
[4] Rev. xi. 2. [5] Rev. xiii. 5. [6] Rev. xii. 6, 14.
[7] Rev. xi. 3.

synchronise with the treading underfoot of the Holy City, the sorrowful testimony of the Witnesses, the feeding of the Woman in the wilderness, and the tyranny of the Ten-horned Beast spoken of by St. John. It is prophesied of all these that they shall continue during the same period of time, never called literally three years and a half, nor literally 1,260 years, but, consistently with the symbolical character of the whole prophecy, sometimes forty-two months; sometimes a time, times, and a half; and sometimes 1,260 days.

Daniel's 1,290 and St. John's 1,260 days relate to nearly the same period of time, for they are both identified with the symbolical expression "a time, times, and a half."[1] Let us, then, apply these periods to the events connected with them.

Antiochus defiled the temple B.C. 170, and 2,300 − 170 = 2,130; therefore, if these days mean years, the Sanctuary of God will be cleansed A.D. 2130. Then, reckoning back from this year, because 2,130 − 1,335 = 795, we arrive at A.D. 795 for the date of the beginning of the tyrannical system of modern times. Five years after this date Charlemagne was crowned at Rome as Emperor of the revived Roman Empire, and the Head of Christendom, and he was at this time at the height of his glory.

The precise and perfect harmony of these chronological periods of 1,335 and 2,300 years seems a strong confirmation of the correctness of the above interpretation of the symbols with which they are respectively connected. And this would seem to be the great use of these notices of time; indeed it is probably the chief, if not the only, use for which they are intended.

They must, however, when understood, keep alive the hope of the faithful in the last ages of persecution. As

[1] "Daniel scribit dies 1,290 temporis ejusdem, quo ponenda sit abominatio in desolationem."—Bede, *in loc.*

it was a great comfort to the Israelites in Egypt to know that God had set an appointed limit to their sufferings; as it was a great support to the Jews in Babylon to know the length of their captivity; and as the Seventy Weeks of Daniel led the daughter of Judah to watch for her Deliverer, at that mournful time when the Sceptre of David had fallen from her hand, and the Roman Beast was couching to spring upon and devour her children: so, even in this age, and much more when the predicted time of trouble approaches, the chronological prophecies of Daniel and St. John are well calculated to console the heart and sustain the faith of all who watch with trembling the fearful signs of the times.

They were never meant to give, and never can give us, the exact Era of His Advent, Who "so cometh as a thief in the night." But they afford, to predictions otherwise vague and difficult to arrange in order, a substance, reality, and consistency from which the soul of the pious and thoughtful may derive pleasure, comfort, and edification. And in that terrific season when Satan shall join battle for the last time with the God of truth and His children, they will doubtless be to the Witnesses of Jesus what the promise to Abraham was to the weary bondmen in Egypt; what the words of Jeremiah were to the captives who wept beside the waters of Babylon; and, finally, what the Seventy Weeks of Daniel were to the Annas and Simeons in Jerusalem, who waited for the consolation of Israel.

As in the case of all the literal notices of time already mentioned, it is impossible to fix the exact date of the commencement of these symbolic periods, and therefore it is equally impossible to do more than conjecture the probable date of their close. It is impossible to feel certain that Daniel's 2,300 years are to be reckoned from the age of Antiochus, although his words seem to imply this. All we

know for certain is that the Sanctuary is not yet cleansed, and therefore that this prophetic period of years has not yet come to an end.

It may also be the case that the 1,260 days of St. John, and the 1,290 and 1,335 days of Daniel may be intended to mark certain great epochs in the future history of the world at which they will severally close. And so the numbers in Daniel may point to the trials and deliverances of his own people, the Jews ; and the years of St. John to those of Christians. Time alone can solve these mysteries, and it is not, we may be sure, the intention of the Divine Author of the Apocalypse to give us any very definite and exact knowledge of those "times and seasons" which He has kept in His Own Power.

It is enough for us to know, and it is a great comfort to know, that a time is fixed in the counsels of the Almighty when the present state of things, so full of sin and suffering, will come to an end, when He will destroy all those who have so long destroyed the peace of the world, and will bring out of the ruin of the present system of things that New Heaven and New Earth in which dwelleth righteousness.

It may be that we are right in conjecturing from the prophetic notices of time above considered that the end will not be just yet, or the conjectures of others may be more correct, that we have already reached the beginning of the end. But to whatever conclusion we may be led, or in whatever manner we may interpret the figurative language of the Apocalypse, a thoughtful study of its prophecies must suggest many solemn reflections to all who look below the surface of things.

It is notorious that the Religion of Jesus has been, and still is, according to the predictions of the Apocalypse, most fearfully corrupted and neglected by the large majority of professing Christians. Neither can we help seeing that the

world, which is Christ's enemy, is, even in the most enlightened countries, worshipped more than Christ.

What right have we then to expect that we shall escape those righteous judgments which God has never failed to inflict, sooner or later, upon all who neglect Him? Are we surprised, when we come to examine the words of the Last Prophet, to find that he does indeed predict the most fearful judgments, through the whole course of history, but especially towards the end, upon all, whether nations or individuals, who worship the Powers of this World more than Christ, who allow the Mark of the Beast to efface the Seal of the Living God?

Let us bear in mind the contrast which is so forcibly drawn in this prophecy between the worshippers of the Lamb and the worshippers of the Beast: between those who have the Mark of the Beast and those who have the Seal of the Living God upon their foreheads. We are sealed with the seal of baptism as the eternal possession of Him Who has purchased us with His Life-blood. But, as a holy father warns us, we must keep ourselves pure and our seal undefiled, that we may enter into eternal life.[1] It is not enough to be baptized Christians: we must be also worshippers of Christ, we must be ready to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Otherwise the Mark of the Beast, the stigma of this world's slavery, will efface by degrees, and in the end render wholly untraceable, the Seal of the Living God. That new stone upon which the Name of God is written will no longer be ours; but in its place will be seen the name and number of the Beast; not the

[1] "Τηρήσατε τὴν σάρκα ἁγνὴν καὶ τὴν σφραγῖδα ἄσπιλον, ἵνα τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν ἀπολάβωμεν."—*S. Clem. Epist.* ii. 8. Thus, he says, "Τηρήσωμεν τὸ βάπτισμα ἁγνὸν καὶ ἀμίαντον." – ii. 6.

"Character est mysterium iniquitatis, quod hypocritæ sub nomine Christi in opere et professione accipiunt."—Bede *in Apoc.*

number and name of God, but the number and name of the world. Let us be well assured that Satan will claim in the end, whatever they may seem to be now, all those who allow the world, his instrument, to brand them as his slaves. He will not only claim them, but, because the Seal of God has been effaced, he will also be allowed to have them.

The prophecy, moreover, is addressed to the whole Church, and is intended for the comfort of every single-minded and earnest Christian, whether he has received the doctrines of Eternal Life from a Papal or a Reformed ministry, in a land of liberty or in a land of bondage. It has warnings, it has comfort for all: fearful warnings for the clergy; fearful revelations of the havoc which wolves have made with the flock.

If, for example, the above interpretation of the First Four Seals be correct, what passage of Scripture is there more worthy of the attention of the clergy, whether Papal or Reformed, more calculated to alarm the conscience, and to open the eyes to some of the more insidious forms of temptation? The lust of power over our fellow-creatures, the desire of personal advancement and the love of money, are too deeply rooted in our hearts to be eradicated by the mere fact of our consecration to the more immediate service of the sanctuary. Clerical ambition and covetousness have, perhaps, done more harm in the world than almost any other vices; and they are, even now, in spite of much improvement of late, among the greatest scandals of a Christian country. And it is notorious that an ambitious and covetous clergy soon become, when the temptation occurs, a persecuting clergy. An established clergy, if allowed to become ambitious and covetous, often become the persecutors of those who attempt their reformation.

But if there is warning for the Rulers of the Church, there is even more warning for the Rulers of the State. A

great work is going on, and we cannot help seeing it, even if we fail to recognise its figurative description in the language of prophecy. The powers of good and evil are preparing for a mighty battle; and when the tempest lowers, surely it is for him whose hand is on the rudder to watch.

And, in conclusion, there is warning, there is comfort for the individual Christian, in whatever country, in whatever Church, in whatever state of life the Providence of God may have cast his lot.

There is warning for him; for it is this prophecy, more than any other book of Holy Scripture, which solves the great riddle of the Christian's life, the enigma of the history of Christianity in the world. The other writings of the Apostles show us the Christian, and the Christian Church, in a state of open hostility to the world and to all the powers of darkness. And therefore we are accustomed to explain away these writings; to blunt the edge of their rebukes; to take the sting out of their censures, and the point out of their warnings. We hold an insidious doctrine, that these things are scarcely applicable to us, that the world is no longer a heathen, but a Christian world. Why need we be so singular, so uncompromising, so self-denying, in our profession of Christ's religion? Times are changed, and Christ is no longer despised and rejected of men.

Now it is the Apocalypse which, rightly understood, beats down this wall of untempered mortar, showing us by lively images the true position of the faithful Christian at all times, the true position of the religion of Jesus, in a world called Christian.

The political triumph of Christianity is exhibited in a twofold aspect, as a blessing and as a curse; as the temporary and partial binding of Satan, on the one hand; but, on the other, as the world-wide adoration of the Beast.

But there is unutterable comfort, as well as warning for him who has ears to hear "what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

He must indeed give up all thoughts of a glorious reign with Christ in this world. He must not look for the restoration of the Church to that state of political influence which once was hers, but from which she has now for ever fallen.

But the Holy Prophecy gives him more than it takes away: the promise of individual salvation, though the whole world should fall through unbelief; the promise of Divine protection, though the whole world should rise up in arms against him.

And as he journeys on in sorrow, it holds out to him the glories and the comforts of the intermediate state; it shows him the White-robed Spirits of the Dead in Christ, resting in the Paradise of God.

The end may be far off, and the journey may be wearisome; but it is for him that God has painted the splendours of the New Jerusalem; it is for him that Christ has opened the portals of that Eternal City whose King is the King of Righteousness, and whose Name is the City of Peace.

"Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν τὰ γενόμενα ἤδη πάντα ἀποδείκνυμεν πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι προκεκηρύχθαι διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, ἀνάγκη καὶ περὶ τῶν ὁμοίως προφητευθέντων, μελλόντων δὲ γίνεσθαι, πίστιν ἔχειν ὡς πάντως γενησομένων."—*Justini Apol.* i. c.

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." [1]

[1] Rev. i. 3.

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